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P L E A

FOR THE

D I V I N I T Y

OF OUR

K. Robinson (R)

LORD JESUS CHRIST.

IN A

PASTORAL LETTER

Addressed to a Congregation of

PROTESTANT DISSENTERS, at CAMBRIDGE.

C A M B R I D G E.

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M.DCC.LXXVI.

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P L E A

FOR THE

DIVINITY

OF OUR

LORD JESUS CHRIST.

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Addressed to the Clergy of

Protestant Dissenters, at CAMBRIDGE.

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My CHRISTIAN BRETHERN,

ALTHOUGH the doctrine of our Saviour's divinity hath been so often and so fully examined, that nothing new remains to be said, yet three considerations induce me to address to you the following reasons to confirm your belief of it.

First. The doctrine itself is important. It regards the OBJECT of our worship. Either Jesus Christ is truly and properly God, or his worshippers are guilty of idolatry.

Next, I wish to preserve that just distinction, which the first founders of your congregation taught you, and which you have hitherto retained, I mean, a DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE VIRTUE OF A CHARACTER AND THE TRUTH OF A DOCTRINE: Your first pastors, the one a fellow of Clare-hall, the other a fellow of Trinity, along with two thousand other clergymen, quitted their preferments in the established church, rather than resign the godlike privilege of self-determining in matters of religion: but at the same time they taught you not to take their doctrines for true because of their resignation: but to examine them yourselves, and to judge of their truth by their conformity to the holy scriptures. The reverend and worthy clergymen, who have lately resigned their livings in the established church rather than act the hypocritical part of worshipping a person, the evidence of whose divinity they could not perceive, have ascertained by their conduct the rectitude of their con-

sciences, the virtue of their characters: but they do not pretend to rest the truth of the doctrine on the merit of their resignation. They conscientiously offer arguments against the divinity of Jesus Christ. We venerate their conscientiousness: but we think their arguments inconclusive.

Lastly. *We wish to cherish that amiable spirit of TOLERATION, which reigns among you: but to preclude an ABUSE of it.* Your present social happiness proceeds from this spirit, and your happiness will last as long as your moderation continues: but should you ever, under pretence of candour and moderation, become indifferent to all religious principles, you would pervert the best disposition to the worst purpose. A firm attachment to principles of your own is perfectly compatible with an extensive charity to those, who discover an attachment as firm to principles diametrically opposite.

Let it not seem strange to you, my brethren, that those gentlemen, who have lately embraced the belief of our Lord's mere humanity, should engage the church in religious controversy. They have done what every conscientious man ought to do. They have endeavoured to free the disciples of Christ from a supposed error in the doctrine of their master's nature. They have begun the controversy in a spirit of candour and benevolence. Controversy does not deserve to be called religious, unless it be religiously managed, that is to say, unless it be managed with all that good faith, undaunted courage, and extensive benevolence, which the gospel recommends. There is the highest reason for this way of disputing. It is founded in the nature of things. He, who never doubted a religious truth, never believed it. Merit and demerit do not consist in believing, or in disbelieving, a truth: but in paying, or in not paying, that
attention

attention to the evidences of it; which its nature and importance require. A fiery passionate dispute about the deity is not a religious controversy: it is a dark diabolical quarrel about God.

It would ill become frail fallible men, it would worse become protestant dissenters, who every day sacrifice to religious liberty, to assume a dictatorial air in matters of faith. What I am going to offer to you on the divinity of Jesus Christ appears to me the truth: but perhaps I am deceived; for *who can understand his errors?* and should I ever discover the deception, I would retract my error. At present I affirm, because I believe, that **JESUS CHRIST IS TRULY AND PROPERLY GOD.**

Before we enter immediately on the evidences of the doctrine, let us discharge it from some incumbrances, which, having been associated with it, weaken its evidence: but which have really nothing to do with the doctrine itself.

First. We give up Saint *Athanasius*. He was, we think, no saint: but an enormous sinner. That creed, which is commonly called his, we do not understand; nor can we conceive how the repetition of it can be thought an act of divine worship acceptable to almighty God; and its damnatory clauses we utterly abhor.

Secondly. We do not propose *distinct addressees* in prayer to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost, as the established litany does. God is one undivided essence, and to him, the one God, is our worship addressed, through the mediator Jesus Christ.

Thirdly. We do not justify any of those *similitudes*, which either ancient or modern writers have used in attempting to explain the nature of God. God, we think, is a being without parallel, and therefore inexplicable. There is not a nature like

his in all the universe. Were an intelligent being to comprehend the nature of every created being in our system; were he to pass millions of ages in passing from system to system, in studying and comprehending the natures of other created intelligences; there would still remain one nature, that of the Supreme Being, in possession of some peerless peculiarity, which had not its likeness in all the Creator's unbounded empire, so that it would never be in the power of this intelligent being, with all his knowledge, to select a creature, and to say of it, This being subsists exactly as the Supreme Being subsists. Now, according to our notion, as all our knowledge of invisible objects is obtained by analogy, that is, by the resemblance, which they bear to visible objects; and as there is in nature no exact resemblance of the nature of God; an attempt to explain the divine nature seems absurd, and impracticable.

Fourthly. We do not think it necessary to enter on *learned arguments*. A doctrine supported only by criticisms, the understanding of which requires much literary skill, is certainly not a doctrine intended for the bulk of mankind. All truths, which fall under the notice of both the learned and the unlearned part of mankind, are subject to learned objections, and to popular objections, and consequently, they are to be defended by learned and by popular arguments. A plain christian ought to propose his own doubts, if he have any, about the truth of a doctrine: but, when his own doubts are removed by the force of plain popular reasoning, he ought not to suffer his mind to be bewildered in Greek and Hebrew characters, the reasonings on which he does not understand. It is the glory of all the doctrines of christianity, and particularly of that of Christ's divinity, to
give

give evidence to common observation, and to plain good sense.

Fifthly. We renounce every notion of a right to *persecute* those, who disbelieve the doctrines of christianity. You, my brethren, have borne a noble testimony against guarding the doctrines of christianity by penal sanctions, by joining above nine hundred of your sister churches in a petition to parliament for relief in the matter of subscription to human articles of faith. We have nothing to wish for you on this article but that your church record may remain for ever unsullied with one act of expulsion for conscience sake. Love is the law of your society, truth the judge to explain it.

Sixthly. We disown what, we think, our opponents incautiously imply. We are, say they, *Unitarians*. We reply, So are we. Our dispute is not, Whether there be one God, or three Gods: but whether the divinity of Jesus Christ be incompatible with the unity of God, which unity both sides believe. There are difficulties on both sides. It must, however, be allowed, that on our side the difficulty lies in the *object*, which is not at all wonderful. On the opposite side the difficulty lies in the *terms*, as we shall observe presently, which, were the matter as our opponents think, would be astonishing indeed.

Finally. We go on the ground, which S. Paul hath marked out, on which he went of old against the philosophers of his day, and on which only, in our opinion, the subject is defensible. *We walk by FAITH, and not by SIGHT*; that is to say, the course of our lives is directed by the belief of certain principles, which we could not have discovered, which we cannot comprehend: but which we believe on the testimony of the revealer. You cannot

cannot be ignorant, my brethren, that S. Paul opposed the GOSPEL, which he called the WISDOM OF GOD, against PHILOSOPHY, which he called WISDOM OF THIS WORLD, and which, he said, *the Greeks sought after*. The philosophy of the Greeks was that science of God, and of the chief good, which was grounded not on the testimony of any superior intelligence, but on the speculations and discoveries of their own reason. He, who understood this, was termed a *wise* man. A *believer*, on the contrary, was one, who, convinced of the imperfection of his own reason, derived his religious ideas from the testimony of that superior intelligence Jesus Christ. In this wise plan, capacity, learning, accuracy of sentiment, were not essentially necessary. The exercise of a little plain common reasoning to obtain evidence of the credibility of the teacher was sufficient.

We go on the same ground. Having experienced the imperfection of our own reason, and being perplexed with the numerous and dissonant reasonings of philosophers on the nature of God, we turn to Jesus Christ, and, perceiving evidences of the truth of his mission, we give credit to his propositions, although, we confess, there are several of them, which we cannot comprehend. This very idea of christianity is a strong argument for its divinity; for no religion can be divine, which doth not adapt itself to the illiterate, that is, to the bulk of mankind. Indeed, on this article, there is very little difference between wisdom and folly, and we might as well expect to see a smaller circle contain a greater, as to see a finite intelligence comprehend the idea of an infinite God. The homely peasant is an insect crawling on the earth; the most polished son of science is an insect on the wing. At what an inconceivable distance are both from the matchless majesty of God!

Our

Our question, then, reduced to its true size, is this; What idea does the new testament mean to convey of the NATURE of Jesus Christ? The proper answer, I humbly conceive, is, The writers of the new testament meant to inform their readers that JESUS CHRIST IS TRULY AND PROPERLY GOD.

In proof of this, my brethren, let me exhort you to attend to the following directions.

I. *Consult the language of the new testament, and compare it with the state of the pagan world at the time of its publication.* If Jesus Christ were not God, the writers of the new testament discovered great injudiciousness in the choice of their words, and adopted a very incautious and dangerous style. From whatever cause it proceeded, mankind have always discovered a strong propensity to idolatry. The whole world, except the small kingdom of Judea, worshipped idols at the time of Jesus Christ's appearance. Jesus Christ; the evangelists, who wrote his history; and the apostles, who wrote epistles to various classes of men; proposed to destroy idolatry, and to establish the worship of one only living and true God. To effect this purpose, it was absolutely necessary for these founders of christianity to avoid confusion and obscurity of language, and to express their ideas in cool and cautious style. That distance, which is between the Supreme, Independent, First Cause, and the most elevated creature, being infinite, every word, that tended to diminish it, would have been not only a logical incongruity: it would have been a source of dangerous errors in theology. Paul and Barnabas had seen a miracle and a sermon procure an offer of their own deification at Lystra; and the general disposition of the heathens afforded them a strong probability, that the history of Jesus Christ, which is made up of miracles and sermons, expres-

five of extraordinary wisdom and power, would procure a deification also of him. If Jesus Christ be only a creature, the distance between him and the creator God is beyond all conception infinitely greater than that between Jesus Christ and Paul; and Jesus and Paul being both creatures, on different lines, indeed, in the scale of being, but both at a distance infinitely remote from the self-existent God, it would signify very little to which of the two the honours of the Deity were transferred. We naturally expect, that men, who *rent their clothes** in abhorrence of confounding the creature with the Creator, should express the nature of God, and the natures of all creatures in the most circumspect language. In speaking of Jesus Christ, where the temptation to idolatry was the stronger, we naturally expect a more than ordinary caution; the case required it.

The writers of the new testament knew these things. They professed to lay aside *excellency of speech and of wisdom, and to declare the testimony of God in words of truth and soberness.*† They did more; they spoke, they said, in words which THE HOLY GHOST TAUGHT.‡ I take up the new testament, and read these words of truth and soberness, in which the Holy Ghost teacheth me the nature of Jesus Christ; and I find these propositions. *The word was God.*§ *God was manifest in the flesh.*|| *His name is Emanuel, God with us.** *John turned many to THE LORD THEIR GOD.*† *The Jews crucified THE LORD OF GLORY.*‡ *God purchased the church with his blood.*§ *God laid down his life for us.*|| *Jesus Christ is LORD OF ALL.*** *Christ*

* Acts xiv. † 1 Cor. ii. 1. Acts xxvi. 25. ‡ 1 Cor. ii. 13. § John i. 1. || 1 Tim. iii. 16. * Mat. i. 23. † Luke i. 16. ‡ 1 Cor. ii. 8. § Acts xx. 28. || 1 John iii. 16. ** Acts x. 36.

is OVER ALL, GOD BLESSED FOR EVER.* *We shall all stand before the judgment seat of CHRIST, so every one of us shall give account of himself to GOD.†* These are a few of many propositions, which the new testament writers lay down relative to Jesus Christ. If the writers intended to affirm the divinity of Jesus Christ, these are *words of truth and soberness*: if not, the language is incautious and unwarrantable, and to address it to men prone to idolatry for the purpose of destroying idolatry, is a strong presumption against their inspiration.

Two considerations render this reflection the more important. First, the Greek language, in which these authors wrote, was not a poor contracted tongue: but “*from its propriety and universality, it was made for all that is great, and all that is beautiful, in every subject, and under every form of writing.*”‡ By the richest words in this copious language the new testament writers describe Jesus Christ. The language would have afforded lower terms to express an inferior nature: but it could have afforded none higher to express the nature of the Supreme God.

Farther. These authors addressed their writings not to the literati, to philosophers and scholars; but to the common people; and consequently they used words in their plain popular signification. The common people, it seems, understood the words in our sense of them; for, in the Dioclesian persecution, when the Roman soldiers burnt a Phrygian city inhabited by christians, *men, women, and children*, submitted to their fate calling upon CHRIST, THE GOD OVER ALL.¶

II. *Compare the style of the new testament with the state of the Jews at the time of its publication.* The
C Jews,

* Rom. ix. 5. † Rom. xiv. 10. 12. ‡ Hermes, b. iii. chap. 5. ¶ Euseb. Eccl. Hist. lib. viii. cap. 2.

Jews, who in earlier ages had been given to idolatry, had been freed from that fatal propensity in the Babylonish captivity. Moses and the prophets had given them a written revelation of the one living and true God, and had described him by select names and titles, the application of which to any other beings they had positively forbidden. In the time of Jesus Christ the Jews were zealous defenders of the unity of God, and of that idea of his perfections, which their scriptures excited. Jesus Christ, and his apostles, professed the highest regard for the Jewish scriptures. They constantly appealed to them. They directed people to search them. They declared, the scriptures could not be broken. Yet the writers of the new testament described Jesus Christ by the very names and titles, by which the writers of the old testament had described the Supreme God.

The TITLES given to
God in the Jewish
Scriptures.

*Thou shalt say I AM hath
sent me.**

*I [Jehovah] am THE
FIRST AND THE LAST.†*

*Jehovah your God is
LORD OF LORDS.**

*THE HIGHEST himself
shall establish Zion.†*

*The Lord of hosts is THE
KING OF GLORY.**

*I will save them by
THE LORD THEIR GOD.†*

Bel-

The TITLES given to
CHRIST in the Chris-
tian Scriptures.

Before Abraham was, I

[Jesus] AM.†

*I [Jesus] am THE
FIRST AND THE LAST. ||*

*The Lamb is LORD OF
LORDS.†*

*John went before the
face of THE HIGHEST. ||*

*Jesus Christ is LORD
OF GLORY.†*

*The SAVIOUR born is
Christ THE LORD. ||*

The

* Exod. iii. 14. † John viii. 58. † Isa. xlv. 6. || Rev. i. 11. 17. * Deut. x. 17. † Rev. xvii. 14. † Ps. lxxxvii. 5. || Luke i. 76. * Ps. xxiv. 10. † James ii. 1. 1 Cor. ii. 8. † Hosea i. 7. || Luke ii. 11.

Belshazzar lifted up himself against THE LORD OF HEAVEN.* *The second man is* THE LORD FROM HEAVEN.†

Jehovah is exalted as HEAD ABOVE ALL.‡ *Christ is* THE HEAD OF ALL principality and power.§

If they, who described Jesus Christ to the Jews by these sacred names and titles, intended to convey an idea of his deity, the description is just, and the application safe: but if they intended to describe a mere man, they were surely of all men the most preposterous. They chose a method of recommending Jesus to the Jews the most likely to alarm and enrage them. Whatever they meant, the Jews understood them in our sense, and took Jesus Christ for a BLASPHEMER. *We stone thee,* said they, *for BLASPHEMY; because thou, being a man, MAKEST THYSELF GOD.*§

Should any one of you, my brethren, standing in St. James's Park, and seeing a gentleman carrying in a sedan preceded by extraordinary attendants, ask a man of veracity, Who is he? and should your friend answer, It is HIS MAJESTY; It is THE KING; It is THE KING OF GREAT BRITAIN; would you not instantly take the gentleman in the sedan for our present most gracious sovereign, George III? And should it afterwards appear that the gentleman in the sedan was not his majesty, but one of the secretaries of state, would you not reproach your informer with either ignorance, or a wilful design of imposing on you? These titles are no more descriptive in England of George III. than the titles above were in Judea of the Supreme God. The enemies of Christ took him for a BLASPHEMER; the disciples of Christ took

C 2

him

* Dan. v. 23. † 1 Cor. xv. 47. ‡ 1 Chron. xxix. 11. § Col. ii. 10. § John x. 33.

him for THE TRUE GOD :* both acted very naturally, both took the titles in the commonly received meaning.

III. *Compare the perfections, which are ascribed to Jesus Christ in the new testament, with those which are ascribed to God in the old.* Every being hath properties peculiar to itself; and accuracy of description consists in the ascription of its own properties to each individual. Were a philosopher to describe fire by the properties of earth, or earth by the properties of air; were he to ascribe the properties of a rational being to a mere animal; his philosophy, far from instructing his pupils, would confuse and perplex them. The worth of an historian very much consists in his accuracy in characterising the persons, of whom he writes. Had a Roman historian described Numa by the qualities of Nero, or Brutus by the qualities of Antony; his history would have been to the last degree contradictory and contemptible: as well might an English historian fill the history of George II. with the pedantry and tyranny of James I. In divinity, as God and creatures are the objects of our contemplation, it is impossible to use too great a degree of discernment in description; for, were a divine to ascribe either the imperfections of creatures to God, or the perfections of God to creatures, the most alarming consequences would follow. The pagan theology was a chaos of confusion on this account. The Jewish theology is pure and chaste in description; it gives unto Jehovah the glory due unto his name,† and it forbids the giving of his glory to another.‡

Notwithstanding so many reasons for precision, Jesus Christ declares, ALL THINGS, THAT THE FATHER

* 1 John v. 20. † 1 Chron. xvi. 28, 29. ‡ Isa. xlii. 8. xlviii. 11.

FATHER HATH, ARE MINE,* a very dangerous proposition if he were not God! and rendered much more so by those descriptions, which the writers of revelation give of his perfections! They ascribe to him the same perfections, which they ascribe to God. They affirm, *In Christ dwelleth ALL THE FULNESS OF THE GODHEAD bodily.*†

PERFECTIONS PERFECTIONS
ascribed to God. ascribed to CHRIST.

E T E R N I T Y.

GOD is an EVERLAST-
ING king.*

The name of THE CHILD
is the EVERLASTING fa-
ther.†

JEHOVAH shall reign
for EVER AND EVER.†

Unto the SON he saith,
THY THRONE O GOD is
for EVER AND EVER.‖

O M N I P O T E N C E.

The name of the LORD
OF HOSTS is the MIGHTY
GOD.*

The name of THE CHILD
is THE MIGHTY GOD.†

I JEHOVAH appeared
by the name of GOD AL-
MIGHTY.†

I THE LORD am THE
ALMIGHTY.‖

I M M U T A B I L I T Y.

I Jehovah CHANGE
NOT.*

The heavens and the
earth shall be changed: but
THOU [the Son] ART THE
SAME.†

Thou MY GOD art THE
SAME, and thy years have
no end.†

JESUS CHRIST THE
SAME yesterday, to day,
and for ever.‖

O M N I-

* John xvi. 15.

† Col. ii. 9.

* Jer. x. 10.

† Isa. ix. 6.

† Exod. xv. 18.

‖ Heb. i. 8, &c.

* Jer. xxxii. 18.

† Isa. ix. 6.

† Exod. vi. 2, 3. ‖ Rev. i.

8. 11. 12. 13. 18.

* Mal. iii. 6.

† Heb. i. 10. 12.

† Psal. cii. 24. 27.

‖ Heb. xiii. 8.

OMNIPRESENCE.

*Do not I JEHOVAH FILL HEAVEN AND EARTH.** *Christ is he, WHO FILLETH ALL IN ALL.†*

IN ALL PLACES where I [Jehovah] record MY NAME, there will I come unto thee, and I will bless thee.‡ *WHERE two or three are gathered together in MY NAME, there am I [Jesus] in the midst of them.¶*

OMNISCIENCE.

*Jehovah is a God of knowledge.** *We are sure that thou [Jesus] knowest all things.†*

I JEHOVAH SEARCH THE HEART, I TRY THE REINS.‡ *I, THE SON OF GOD, AM HE, WHICH SEARCHETH THE REINS AND HEARTS.¶*

Whatever other excellencies we can conceive in the divine nature are ascribed to God and Christ in the two following passages. The last is evidently a quotation of the first. *Blessed be thou Lord God of Israel our Father for ever and ever. Thine O Lord is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all, that is in the heaven, and in the earth, is thine: thine is the kingdom, O Lord! and thou art exalted above all. Both riches and honour come of thee, and thou reignest over all, and in thine hand is power and might, and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now therefore, our God! we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name. §* *Worthy is the Lamb, that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. This is called worshipping*

* Eph. i. 20. 23. † Jer. xxiii. 24. ‡ Exod. xx. 24. ¶ Matt. xviii. 20. * 1 Sam. ii. 5. † John xvi. 30. ii. 24, 25. xxi. 17. ‡ Jer. xvii. 10. 1 Kings viii. 39. ¶ Rev. ii. 23. § 1 Chron. xxix. 10, &c.

*worshipping him, that liveth for ever and ever.** If they, who ascribe the perfections of deity to Jesus Christ, have fallen into an error, they have been led into it by the writers of the new testament. It is not credible, that men, who attributed to EVERY SEED *its own body*; who distinguished *the flesh of MEN from that of BEASTS*; and *that of FISHES from that of BIRDS*; *the glory of CELESTIAL bodies from the glory of TERRESTRIAL*;† it is not credible, I say, that such accurate writers could make a mistake so gross as to ascribe the excellencies of GOD to a MERE MAN. If Jesus Christ be God, the ascription of the perfections of God to him is proper: if he be not, the apostles are chargeable with weakness or wickedness, and either would destroy their claim of inspiration.

IV. *Consider the WORKS, that are ascribed to Jesus Christ, and compare them with the claims of Jehovah.* The Supreme God, in order to produce the happiness of his creatures, hath displayed the perfections of his nature in several exterior works; and these works are declared by the inspired writers to be evidences of *his eternal power and Godhead.*‡ It would be an act of injustice to God, and a cause of dangerous errors to men, to ascribe these works to any other being. The danger would not lie in ascribing them to one creature rather than another: but in the ascribing of them to any creature rather than to the true God. What should we think of an historian, who should ascribe the invention of printing to William the Conqueror; the building of Rome to Sir Isaac Newton; the colonizing of America to Julius Cæsar; and the writing of the Pentateuch to Mr. Pope? yet these mistakes in the history of creatures would have no consequences worth mentioning in comparison of those,

* Rev. v. 12, 13, 14. † 1 Cor. xv. 38, &c. ‡ Rom. i. 20.

those, which the writers of the new testament have made by ascribing the works of Jehovah to the man Jesus. Nothing can account for their conduct, except in their system Jesus and Jehovah be the same.

IS CREATION a work of God? *By Jesus Christ were all things CREATED, that are in heaven, or that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, all things were created by him, and for him.**

IS PRESERVATION a work of God? *Jesus Christ UPHOLDS all things by the word of his power.† By him all things CONSIST.‡*

IS THE MISSION OF THE PROPHETS a work of God? *Jesus Christ is THE LORD GOD OF THE HOLY PROPHETS; and it was THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST, which testified in them beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.¶*

IS the SALVATION of sinners a work of God? *Christ is THE SAVIOUR of the world; the AUTHOR OF ETERNAL SALVATION to all them that obey him.§*

IS THE FORGIVENESS OF SIN a work of God? *The Son of man hath power TO FORGIVE SINS.**

The same might be said of the *illumination* of the mind; the *sanctification* of the heart; the *resurrection* of the dead; the *judging* of the world; the *glorification* of the righteous; the *eternal punishment* of the wicked; all which works in one part of scripture are ascribed to God, and all which in another part of scripture are ascribed to JESUS CHRIST.

Consider now into what contradictions these writers must fall if Jesus Christ be not God. They contradict one another, they contradict themselves. They

* Col. i. 16. † Heb. i. 3. ‡ Col. i. 17. ¶ Neh. ix. 30. Rev. xxii. 6. 16. § Pet. i. 11. § John iv. 42. Heb. v. 9. * Mat. ix. 6.

They degrade writings, which, they pretend, are inspired, below the lowest scribbling of the meanest authors. *In the beginning*, says Moses, *GOD created the heavens and the earth* *. It is a mistake, says the Apostle John, *In the beginning THE WORD, THAT WAS MADE FLESH, made all things, and without him was not any thing made that was made.* † Elihu asks, *WHO hath disposed the whole world?* ‡ Jehovah asks out of the whirlwind, *WHO laid the measures thereof? WHO stretched the line upon it? WHO laid the corner-stone thereof?* || All the old testament writers reply, *THE LORD OF HOSTS, founded the heavens, the earth, the world, and the fulness thereof.* § No such thing, says the Apostle John, *THE WORD, that was made flesh, and dwelt among us, made the world.* * Hezekiah looks up to heaven, and says, *O LORD GOD of Israel, thou art THE GOD, even THOU ALONE, of all the kingdoms of the earth, thou hast made heaven and earth.* † Paul lifts up his eyes to Jesus, and says, *THY THRONE, O GOD! is for ever and ever. THOU LORD in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of THY hands.* ‡ This is Paul's language to his countrymen: but, behold! when the same Paul arrives at Athens, he contradicts himself, and tells the Athenians, that *GOD made the world, and all things therein; HE is Lord of heaven and earth; HE giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.* || If Jesus Christ and the Father be ONE § GOD, all these seeming inconsistencies vanish: if not, it ill becomes such writers to say, *As God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay.* *

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There

Gen. i. 1. † John i. 1. 14. 3. ‡ Job xxxiv. 13.
 || Job xxxviii. 1. 5. 6. § Psal. lxxxix. 11c. * John i. 14.
 10. † 2 Kings xix. 15. ‡ Heb. i. 8. 10. || Acts xviii.
 24. 25. § John x. 30. * 2 Cor. i. 18.

There have been enthusiasts in England; there was a Hacket in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and there was a James Naylor in the time of Cromwell, who assumed the names and titles of Jesus Christ, and arrogated to themselves those works, which are peculiar to him; one was executed, the other was imprisoned, set in the pillory, and had his tongue bored through for blasphemy, and in vain did he plead that the *honours were not paid to him, but to Jesus Christ, who dwelt in him.* God forbid we should justify such shocking severities. We are sorry that the religious history of our country is stained with blood; but, if these men were guilty of a high misdemeanour, (and that they were the most moderate must allow) in arrogating to themselves the honours of another man, how much more guilt must they accumulate, who ascribe to *any man*, to Moses, or to Christ, the names, the titles, and the works of the ineffable God? If Jesus be a mere man, the distance between Hacket and Jesus is trifling in comparison of the distance of both from the infinite God. The apostles ought to have kept up an idea of this distance. They have not done so; on the contrary, they have ascribed the glories of God to Jesus Christ. Either Jesus Christ is God, or their conduct is unaccountable.

V. Consider that WORSHIP, which the scriptures claim for Jesus Christ. It is a command of God, repeated by our Saviour, *Thou shalt worship THE LORD THY GOD, and HIM ONLY shalt thou serve.** Yet these very scriptures command all the angels of God to worship Christ.† They say, *At the name of Jesus every knee in heaven, and in earth, should bow.‡* They command all men to honour the Son even as they

* Matt. iv. 10. Deut. x. 20. † Heb. i. 6. ‡ Phil.
ii. 10.

*honour the Father.** Twenty times in the new testament, *Grace, mercy, and peace,* are implored of *Christ*, together with the *Father*. *Baptism* is an act of worship performed in *his name*.† *Swearing* is an act of worship, a solemn appeal in important cases to the omniscient God; and this appeal is made to *Christ*.‡ The committing of the soul to God at death is a sacred act of worship; in the performance of this act Stephen died, saying, *Lord Jesus receive my spirit.*§ The whole host of heaven *worship him, that sitteth upon the throne, and the Lamb, for ever and ever.*§ The reverend Mr. Lindsey, who says “that religious worship is appropriated to God;” that “it is incommunicable to any other person whatsoever;” that “it could not be given to any other without the guilt of idolatry;” yet adds, “unquestionably Stephen made this request, [Acts vii. 59.] addressed this prayer to the Lord Jesus.” Was Stephen then guilty of idolatry? no, adds Mr. Lindsey, the blessed martyr *saw Jesus with his eyes*, and called him the son of man: But this can be no precedent for directing prayer to him *unseen*, or addressing him as God.”* I have a profound respect for this conscientious apologist; but I cannot help astonishment at this reasoning. According to this reasoning, idolatry does not consist in worshipping a creature: but in worshipping an *unseen* creature. The guilt does not lie in the transfer of my worship: but it lies in my *not seeing* the object to whom the transfer is made. Had all the apostles, had the whole Jewish nation, prayed to Jesus Christ during his abode on earth, nothing, according to this reasoning, could be inferred from it to direct our worship now; because

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* John v. 23. † Matt. xxviii. 19. ‡ Rom. ix. 1.
 § Acts vii. 59. Psal. xxxi. 5. § Rev. v. 13, 14. * Apo-
 logy, pages 120. 129. edit. 2d.

they saw him with their eyes, and to us he is *unseen*. According to this, when blind Bartimeus said, *Jesus! thou son of David! have mercy on me*; he was guilty of idolatry; for he addressed an *unseen* Jesus: but when, having received his sight, *he followed Jesus in the way*,* and praised him, he ceased to be an idolater; and, had he been stoned in the exercise, he would have been a *blessed martyr*. S. Peter spoke more to the purpose, when he said to those strangers, who had never been blessed with a sight of Christ; *whom, having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.*†

The reverend Mr. Jebb thinks, “ that the addresses of christians may with the same propriety be directed to the Virgin Mary, as to the person of our Lord.”‡ I hope this ingenious friend of learning and candour will reconsider this matter. Should he see reason to change his mind, he would, I am sure, ingenuously and zealously propagate the faith, which now, alas! he endeavours to destroy. Let us then contrast a devotee of the Virgin Mary with a worshipper of Jesus Christ.

David composed a psalm, in which he said, *Into thine hand I commit my spirit*, O LORD GOD OF TRUTH. S. Stephen invoked Jesus Christ at his death, and said, LORD JESUS *receive my spirit*.|| Cardinal Bonaventure, who composed *Our Lady's Psalter*, that is to say, who converted all the addresses to God in the book of Psalms into invocations of the Virgin Mary, by changing the word *Lord*, or *Jehovah*, into *Lady*, said, *Into thine hand I commit my spirit*, O LADY.§ David, Stephen, and the Cardinal, put up the same address: but they directed it to different objects. Of the propriety of

* Mark x. † 1 Pet. i. 8. ‡ Reasons for Resignation, p. 3. edit. 3. || Acts vii. 59. § Psal. xxxi. 5.

of David's address, there is no doubt. He deposited his life in the hand of Jehovah; *returned his spirit to God, who gave it;** agreeably to the received doctrine of his church. But the question is, Who, Stephen, or the Cardinal, acted with the greatest propriety: the former in performing the same devotional act to Jesus Christ; or the latter in performing it to the Virgin Mary? We will not judge in our own cause. Let us suppose a thoughtful Jew present at Stephen's death, and hearing him utter these words, *Lord Jesus receive my spirit.* He would instantly recollect, that he had heard something like the words before, and he would soon find that the dying man took them from the thirty-first psalm. His natural train of thought, then, would be this. "David committed his spirit to JEHOVAH. This enthusiast committed his to JESUS. Did he take Jesus and Jehovah for THE SAME? David deposited his soul in the hands of the GOD OF TRUTH. Stephen his in the hands of JESUS. He certainly took Jesus of Nazareth for the God of truth! David committed his spirit to God because God had REDEEMED him from many evils in the course of his providence; and because God had promised to redeem him from the power of the grave. Did this man take Jesus of Nazareth for the REDEEMER of Israel? The government of both worlds, the disposal of providence in this life, the distribution of rewards in the next; are these in the hands of Jesus? What could he have said more of the MOST HIGH GOD, the possessor of heaven and earth?† Is not the spirit in man THE INSPIRATION OF THE ALMIGHTY?‡ He, who stretched out the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth, did not he form the spirit of man with-

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* Eccl. xii. 7. † Gen. xiv. 9. ‡ Job xxxii. 8.

“ in him ? || While it remains in the body, is it not
“ the candle OF JEHOVAH ? * When it returns,
“ doth it not return TO GOD who gave it ? † The
“ soul of every living thing, the breath of all man-
“ kind, are they not in JEHOVAH’S HAND ? ‡ The
“ dying blasphemer, like the idolatrous Belshazzar,
“ knew these things, lifted up himself against the Lord
“ of heaven ; and the God in whose hand his breath
“ was, and all his ways, he hath not glorified. || He
“ was accused of speaking blasphemous words against
“ Moses, and against God. § He was guilty : he
“ died with that confidence in a creature, which he
“ ought to have placed on God alone. Cursed is
“ the man, that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh
“ his arm.” * If Jesus Christ be God, Stephen
 acted with propriety : if not, the same reasons,
 that keep us from addressing him, ought to have
 operated in Stephen ; yea, he was more obliged to
 refrain by his circumstances ; he was under a charge
 of blasphemy, and he ought to have used a more
 than ordinary caution, lest his adversaries should
 have obtained a shadow of an argument against
 him. People, who have been unjustly put to
 death for pretended treasonable practices, have al-
 ways taken care to pray aloud for the reigning
 prince just before their execution. The propriety
 of their conduct is obvious. But here is an unac-
 countable case. A man accused of blasphemy,
 denying the charge, asserting in his defence the
 honours of the true God, turning the accusation
 against his judges, charging their ancestors with
 guilt for worshipping the host of heaven, and yet
 invoking Jesus, a mere man, in language which
 he, his judges, his executioners, and the whole
 nation, had always appropriated to Almighty God !
 The

|| Zech. xii. 1. * Prov. xx. 27. † Eccl. xii. 7. ‡ Job xii.
 10. || Dan. v. 22, 23. § Acts vi. 11. * Jer. xvii. 5.

The propriety of Stephen's conduct depends on his faith in the deity of Christ.

Let us attend to Cardinal Bonaventure. He invokes in his dying moments, suppose, the Virgin Mary, and says, *Into thine hands, O Lady! I commit my spirit.* A protestant asks, *Who hath required this at your hands?** David resigned his soul into the hands of the TRUE GOD. Jesus Christ adopted David's words, and commended his spirit into the hands of his FATHER.† S. Stephen committed his into the hands of JESUS. According to my system, Jesus, the Father, and the true God, ARE ONE.‡ The terms of invocation differ, the object is the same, each invocation is therefore proper. But, granting for a moment, that Jesus is a mere man, I have, at least, in Stephen's invocation of him, a precedent for committing my soul to him: but where is yours for invoking Mary? Who will pretend to say, there is the same propriety in both? Is it as proper to act without a precedent, as with one? And are Jesus Christ's titles to adoration equally as spurious as those of Mary? Surely, the probability is stronger in my favour, when I invoke him, whom all the angels are commanded to worship, than when I invoke her, in whose favour no such command can be produced. S. Stephen, the blessed martyr, is surely a safer guide than a superstitious cardinal of the church of Rome.

The word *worship*, my brethren, is used in scripture in two senses. It is sometimes put for civil respect; and sometimes for religious homage. In the first sense Abraham *worshipped* the sons of Heth;|| and Nebuchadnezzar *worshipped* Daniel, that is to say, *he made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts*, declaring at the same time that Daniel's

God

* Isa. i. 12. † Luke xxiii. 46. ‡ John x. 30. || Gen. xxxiii. 7. 12.

God was God or Gods. § This sense of the word is yet retained in the office for the solemnizing of marriage. But in its second meaning it is inapplicable to every creature, and belongs to God alone. The ideas of *supreme* and *subordinate* religious worship are unknown to the holy scripture. *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*, is a law of all ages, and belongs to christians as well as to Jews.

Let us suppose *Timon*, a deacon of the christian congregation at Jerusalem, just returned from the stoning of Stephen, falling into the following conversation with a *Caleb*, a christian, who had continued in the city, and had only heard a confused account of the martyr's death.

Caleb. Is Stephen really dead?

Timon. He is, I saw him fall asleep; † and, before sun-set, the sorrowful brotherhood intend to bury him. †

C. Did you hear his trial?

T. I was in court, and heard as much as could be expected in a place of such uncommon tumult and noise.

C. Who were his accusers?

T. We have, you know, in this city several colleges, where the sons of those Jews, who live in Asia, Egypt, Greece, and Italy, are sent to be educated. Either the masters, or the students, of four of these houses, pretended some time ago to confute our doctrine, and to that end *disputed* with Stephen. || Unable to resist the force of his reasoning, they hit on the abominable method of rendering him odious to government, and procured men to accuse him of *blasphemy*. § These accusers deposed against him.

C. The

§ Dan. ii. 46, 47, 48. † Acts vii. 60. † viii. 2. || vi. 9. § vi. 9, 10, 11.

C. The cause was tried then in the ecclesiastical court.

T. It was. The Sanhedrim sat, and the high-priest was judge.*

C. The cause certainly belonged to that court: but, as the law of blasphemy adjudges the blasphemer to be stoned to death;† and as the Romans have deprived all our courts of the power of putting a subject to death; the whole business of the ecclesiastical court is to determine the nature of the crime. In order to do this the Sanhedrim can receive an accusation, arrest a subject, place him at their bar, receive the depositions of witnesses against him, give an opinion on the nature of the crime, and *declare* what punishment our law inflicts on the criminal. But the *infliction* of the punishment belongs to the temporal courts. This order was observed in the trial of our blessed Master.

T. Far from observing this order now, they had not patience to hear him out; they interrupted him in making his defence; they behaved like madmen; the court declared him guilty of blasphemy, and the zealots, affecting to fall in with the declaration, hurried him out of the city and stoned him to death, without any authority from the governor. Alas! had we been aware. . .

C. Aware of what, brother? Had we informed the governor of the tumult; had he resented their encroachment on his office; had he taken Stephen out of their hands; his interposition would have delayed his execution a day or two: but it would not have saved his life. The Sanhedrim have not the power of putting a subject to death: but they have the power of determining when he deserves to die; and the sordid scribes will take care so to explain the word blasphemy as to include the case

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* Acts vi. 12. vii. 1. † Lev. xxiv. 10—17.

under consideration, and to expose the accused to the penalty of a law, which he has not broken.

T. How do the scribes define blasphemy?

C. They include in the term a great many misdemeanors, which have no relation, or a very distant one, to that action, which the statute describes by the word blasphemy, the punishment of which is lapidation. According to them, to speak disrespectfully of Moses, of the law, of the temple, of the city, is to be guilty of blasphemy. To do either of these, say they, is to insult God; for the temple is his sanctuary, the city is his holy place, Moses is his servant, and the law is his will. Thus under the shew of a wise and scrupulous piety they abuse the word, and involve the innocent with the guilty, first in the crime, and last in the punishment of blasphemy.

T. How would you define that blasphemy, which Moses in the law condemns?

C. Blasphemy, in my opinion, is the speaking or writing of any thing knowingly and wilfully, which is injurious to the perfections of Jehovah. Three things, I think, are essential to the crime. 1. *God* must be the object. 2. The *words*, which are spoken or written, must be in their *nature*, and independently on consequences, that others may derive from them, injurious to the object, God. 3. The *subject*, or he who commits the crime, must commit it *knowing* it to be injurious to God, and *intending* to have it understood so. To this blasphemy, and, I believe, to no other, the statute belongs. The blasphemy of him, on whose account the law was made;* that of Pharaoh;† and that of Rabshakeh;‡ agree to this definition. What I have described I call REAL blasphemy: but there

* Lev. xxiv. 10. † Exod. v. 2. viii. 19. ix. 27. ‡ Isa. xxxvi.

is a *RELATIVE* blasphemy, which proceeds from false opinions of religion. A good man may be guilty of this *ignorantly*, by propagating opinions, which tend to dishonour God, but the tendency of which he does not perceive. A good man may be guilty of this *constructively*, for if he speak freely against received errors, which the priests hold sacred, they will construe what he says into blasphemy.

T. Thus they dealt with Stephen. They accused him of speaking *blasphemous words against Moses, and against God.** In proof of which the witnesses deposed, that they had heard him say, *Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place.†* This is a prophecy, but it is not blasphemy; our rulers should have examined the truth of this prediction.

C. They did not want information. But what followed in court?

T. The holy man, throwing the dispositions of his heart into the features of his face, made his defence. The noise and confusion of the court were so great that we could hear only parts of it, and so violent was the rage of his judges, that they would not suffer him to finish it. He intended to own, I thought, the prediction, and to deny the blasphemy of it. For these purposes he ran through the history of our nation, and shew the design of God in instituting ceremonial usages. They were well adapted to prevent idolatry, to which the nation had been formerly addicted; and to represent those substantial benefits, which the Messiah was to procure. It was no blasphemy to say that when they had answered the end of their institution, they were to be abolished. Perceiving that they would not let him go through his defence, he taxed his judges with murdering Jesus Christ, and with violating

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* Acts vi. 11. † vi. 14.

lating the law. *When they heard these charges, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth: But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the son of man standing on the right hand of God.*

C. Where was he when he exclaimed thus?

T. He was at the bar in the council-chamber in the temple, where the Sanhedrim sit to hear causes; the place, against which his accusers said *he had spoken blasphemous words.** This exclamation broke up the court in the utmost confusion, some *cried out with a loud voice, Blasphemy! Blasphemy!* others *stopped their ears,* and the zealots, *rusting on him with one accord,* led him from the temple, and out of the city, to his execution.† They stoned him without the gate on the east side of the city, on the steep descent towards the vale of Jehosaphat.‡

C. You followed, I presume; did you get near enough to hear any of his last words?

T. I saw him kneel down, and I heard him address two prayers to Jesus Christ; one for himself, the other for his enemies. The first was, *Lord Jesus receive my spirit;* and the last, *Lord lay not this sin to their charge.* He *fell asleep* as soon as he had uttered the last of these ejaculations.

C. Did our compassionate master appear to him again at the place of execution, as he had appeared to him in the hall?

T. I heard nothing of such an appearance.||

C. His death very much resembled that of our Saviour. His two last prayers were evidently taken from the lips of our departing Lord. You remember,

* Acts vi. 13, 14. † vii. 57, 58. ‡ Pocock's Descrip. of the East, vol. ii. chap. 6. || Timon had not read a late Apology, which says, *Stephen saw Jesus, when he prayed to him.*

ber, one of his petitions was, *Father! forgive them:* and another, *Father! into thy hands I commend my spirit.* § The forgiving of sins, and the beatifying of a departing soul, are works of Jehovah; to him Jesus Christ applied for both; and Stephen, by applying to Jesus for both these blessings, has proved, that, in his opinion, Jesus and Jehovah are one.

T. The murderers of Stephen, then, will continue to think, that he was guilty of blasphemy?

C. Undoubtedly. They will say, God is an *allsufficient* being.* His allsufficiency is the ground on which our scriptures claim religious worship for him.† The invocation of others implies an insufficiency in God.‡ The forgiveness of sin is one of his most glorious works.|| The receiving of a departing soul is another. § Prayer is called *sacrifice*,* and, the law says, *He, that sacrificeth to any God, save unto JEHOVAH ONLY, he shall be utterly destroyed.*† Thus will the good man's character lie under a charge of constructive blasphemy. Had Stephen taken Jesus Christ, as some of our countrymen take him, for a *good man* only,‡ he would have been guilty of *RELATIVE* blasphemy by invoking him, for he would have given a sanction to a practice, which evidently tends to dishonour God, by diverting some of the noblest acts of the mind from him, and by fixing them on a creature, contrary to his express command, *THOU SHALT WORSHIP NO OTHER GOD: FOR JEHOVAH, WHOSE NAME IS JEALOUS, IS A JEALOUS GOD.*|| The lapidation of Stephen, however, cannot be justified in either of these cases; for the law relates only to *REAL* blasphemy, as I said before.

I leave

§ Luke xxiii. 34. 46. * Gen. xvii. 1. † Psal. xcv. xcvi. Isa. xl. &c. ‡ 2 Kings i. 3. || Dan. ix. 9. Exod. xxxiv. 7. Luke vii. 49. § Psal. xxxi. 5. * Psal. cxli. 2. cxvi. 17. † Exod. xxii. 20. ‡ John vii. 12. || Exod. xxxiv. 14.

I leave the application of the truths, which, for variety-sake, I have thrown into a dialogue form, and pass to another evidence of Christ's divinity.

VI. *Observe, my brethren, the application of old testament passages, which belong to Jehovah, to Jesus Christ in the new testament, and try whether you can acquit the writers of the new testament of misrepresentation, on supposition that Jesus is not God.* This observation does not so much regard the force of the terms; as the wisdom and equity of those, who apply them. In men, who pretend to inspiration, we have a right to look for the utmost precision. What should we have thought of Peter, if he had claimed the crown of Judea from the reigning prince, and had said in support of his claim, It is written, DAVID'S seed shall endure for ever, and HIS throne as the sun before me? * And what then? it would have been said, what have you to do with what is predicted of another person? Let us apply this to the subject in hand. S. Paul says, *We shall all stand before the judgment seat of CHRIST.* That we shall all be judged, we allow. But how do you prove that Christ shall be our judge? *Because,* adds the apostle, *it is written, As I live, saith THE LORD, every knee shall bow to ME, and every tongue shall confess to GOD.* † What sort of reasoning is this? How does this apply to Christ if Christ be not God? and how dare a man quote one of the most guarded passages in the old testament for such a purpose? The passage is this. *There is NO GOD ELSE BESIDE ME. A just God and a Saviour, there is NONE BESIDE ME. I am God, and THERE IS NONE ELSE. Unto ME every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.* ‡ The apostle's reasoning is this. Jehovah says every knee shall bow to him. Jesus is Jehovah. Therefore every knee shall bow to Jesus.

John

* Psal. lxxxix. 20. 36. † Rom. xiv. 10, 11. ‡ Isa. xlv. 20, &c.

John the Baptist . . is he, who was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, Prepare ye the way. || *Isaiah saith, Prepare the way of THE LORD, make straight a highway for OUR GOD. Say unto the cities of Judah, Behold YOUR GOD. Behold, the LORD GOD will come, and feed his flock like a shepherd. §* But what has John the Baptist to do with all this description, if Jesus Christ be only a messenger of Jehovah, and not Jehovah himself; for Isaiah saith, Prepare ye the way of JEHOVAH?

A prophet, speaking in the name of God, says, *The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall look upon ME, whom they pierced.** An evangelist says, *One of the soldiers with a spear pierced the side of Jesus, and the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, They shall look on HIM, whom they pierced.†*

A prophet says, *I saw the LORD sitting upon a throne, high, and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. And Seraphims cried one to another, HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, IS THE LORD OF HOSTS, the whole earth is full of HIS glory.‡* An evangelist saith, *These things said Esaias, when he saw HIS glory, and spake of HIM; that is, of Jesus. ||*

A prophet says, *The LORD OF HOSTS HIMSELF shall be for a stone of stumbling. §* An apostle says, *Christ is that stone of stumbling.**

It would be endless to enumerate all the passages, which are thus applied to Jesus Christ. Allow Jesus Christ to be God, and all these applications are proper. If we deny it, the new testament, we must own, is one of the most unaccountable compositions in the world, calculated to make easy things hard to be understood.

Let

|| Matt. iii. 1. 3. § Isa. xl. 3. 9. 10. 11. * Zech. xii. 10.
† John xix. 34. 36. 37. ‡ Isa. vi. 1. 2. 3. || John xii. 39.
§ Isa. viii. 13. 14. * 1 Pet. ii. 8.

Let us take a single passage of the old testament, and let us see what the application of it to Jesus Christ proves. John the Baptist sends two of his disciples to Jesus Christ to ask him, Whether he were the expected Messiah? The messengers find him in a crowd of diseased people. To one, who had been blind, he gives sight. To another, who had been deaf, he gives hearing. He cleanseth lepers, and makes the lame walk. Having healed the infirmities of their bodies, he addresseth himself to the disorders of their minds, and speaks with an authority unknown to the scribes. By the gracefulness of his deportment, he obtains the attention of his hearers. By the truth of his doctrine, he obtains the assent of their minds. By cloathing his ideas with images, the archetypes of which had produced pleasure and pain in his hearers, he obtains an authority over their hearts, and excites, as he pleases, the hopes, the fears, the joys, the sorrows, of his audience. Having opened these grand springs of human action, he gives plain and profitable rules of conduct for the producing and promoting of social happiness. John's messengers took the first opportunity of delivering their message. *John Baptist, say they, hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come, or look we for another? Jesus answering, said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have SEEN and HEARD, how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. And blessed is he whosoever shall not be offended in me.* John's disciples return to the prison; tell their master what miracles they had seen, and what doctrines they had heard, adding that Jesus Christ had not made a direct reply to their question:

question: but had put the proof of his Messiahship on his causing the blind to see, the lame to walk, and so on; and on the plainness of his doctrine to the lowest of mankind. This is the fact: Let us hear John and his two disciples, whom we will venture to name Reuben and Othniel; and let us see what they can make of this fact.

Reuben. We do not well comprehend the meaning of Jesus.

John. I understand him thoroughly. He meant, Read what the prophets predict of the Messiah; compare my ministry with their predictions; and if my history exactly answer their prophecies, you may fairly infer that I am the Messiah, so often promised, and so eagerly expected.

Othniel. The prophecies are very numerous, master! to which of them did he refer us?

J. To the thirty-first section of the prophecy of Isaiah; where miraculous works and simplicity of doctrine are said to characterise the Messiah's ministry; and these are the two evidences of his mission, which he gave you; *The blind see—the poor understand good tidings.* Take the parchment, and read the section.

R. *The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them: and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it; the excellency of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of Jehovah, and the excellency of our God. Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them, that are of fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence, he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue*

of the dumb sing; for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water. In the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes. And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion...

J. Stop. Read the last line again.

R. *The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.*

J. FOOLS SHALL NOT ERR THEREIN: that is to say, *The way of holiness* shall be rendered so plain by the doctrine of the Messiah, that the most illiterate of mankind shall not be liable to err therein. To this prophecy Jesus referred you, when he said, *The poor have the gospel preached unto them.* This excellent method of teaching, and the miraculous recovery of sight to the blind, and of health to the diseased, were to take place at the same time, and to be introduced by the same person, and the person who introduceth both these, is the promised Messiah.

O. We saw Jesus perform miracles; and we heard him speak as never man spake; and the prophet, we see, describes these actions, as proofs of the identity of the Messiah: but, Rabbi! the prophet does not ascribe these events to man, he says, *God will come; Behold! YOUR GOD will come; He will come and save you*; and he calls the whole combination of events a display of THE GLORY OF JEHOVAH, the excellency of our God. What has Jesus of Nazareth to do with the incommunicable name of the blessed God?

J. The Messiah is sometimes spoken of in our prophecies as *Jehovah*, and sometimes he is called
Jehovah's

Jehovah's servant. Sometimes the noblest works are ascribed to him, and sometimes the greatest sufferings. Our wise men, whose *eyes are darkened*, and whose *table is become a snare*, so that *what should have been for their welfare is become a trap*,* have imagined two Messiahs, the one an exalted, the other a debased person: but the truth is, The Messiah is one extraordinary person, in whom two natures, the nature of God and the nature of man, are united. What is affirmed of him in one view cannot be said of him in another. This idea of the person of the Messiah is a key to the prophecies. Without using it you will never be able to satisfy yourselves.

R. Is Jesus Lord then as well as Christ?

Y. Our family have always thought so. My father taught me to believe myself *a prophet of THE HIGHEST*, because I was to *go before the face of THE LORD to prepare his ways*; and he took his notion of the *Lord*, before whom I had the honour to go, from this prophet, who calls the person, before whom I go, **JEHOVAH, OUR GOD.**†

R. I have been told, that when the late king enquired of the scribes where the Messiah should be born, they told him at Bethlehem-Judah.‡ Now the same prophet, who fixes the *place* of his birth, fixes also the *rank* of him, who was to be born, the *ruler of Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting, is to be born in Bethlehem-Judah.*|| I confess this passage was incomprehensible to me. I could not conceive how a child born at Bethlehem could cause *emanations of his excellency from the days of eternity.*

Y. There are many prophecies of this kind, and to our puerile and depraved minds they may appear inconsistent,

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* Psal. lxxix. 22, 23. † Isa. xl. 3. Luke iii. 4. ‡ Matt. ii. 4.
|| Micah v. 2.

Inconsistent, and even *scandalous*. Do you think Jesus said in vain, *Blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me?*

R. God forbid, Rabbi! that we should form our judgments of natural dignity, or of moral excellency, by exterior appearances according to the false maxims of the world. You have taught us, that the same wisdom, which buried gold and diamonds in dark subterranean caverns of rock, and earth, generally throws a veil of meanness over real majesty, at once creating a field to exercise human industry, and a crown to reward it. Were we to renounce this principle, we should reverence Herod, the cruellest of tyrants, on the throne, and forsake you, the best of masters, in the prison.

Y. Apply this principle to the prophecy of Micah, *The GOINGS FORTH of him, who shall COME FORTH out of Bethlehem, have been from of old, from everlasting*; that is to say in plain popular style, He, who shall be born at Bethlehem, appeared often to our fathers in the earlier ages of the world.

O. Will you explain yourself, master?

Y. I will. But, as I am going to reason from three facts, take care you do not draw your conclusion from either of them separately; my conclusion ariseth from the union of the three. Is God, think you, invisible?

O. Undoubtedly he is. You have informed us, that *no man HATH seen God at any time*,* and Moses hath taught us, that *no man CAN see God*.† We venerate these testimonies the more, because, we know, they are conformable to the dictates of right reason.

Y. This is one fact. The first great cause, the infinite spirit, whom we call Jehovah, is invisible

* John i, 15.

† Exod. xxxiii. 20.

to every material eye. Let us proceed to the second. Did Jehovah ever appear to our fathers?

R. Some being in the form of an angel, or of a man, who called himself Jehovah, often appeared to our ancestors, especially in the early ages of the world.

Y. If the man, or the messenger, who appeared to our fathers, called himself Jehovah, certainly he was Jehovah. The great design of our religion is to distinguish the one living and true God from every other being. For this purpose God taught Moses to call him by a particular NAME, and said, *THIS is my memorial unto all generations.** A promiscuous use of names always produceth a confusion of ideas in regard to the objects, to which the names are given, and, had not Moses maintained a chaste precision of style in his writings, his law would have defeated its own design. Beside, he, who appeared to our fathers, suffered himself to be worshipped, and not only took the names and titles of Jehovah, but also promised and threatened, blessed and chastised in his own right; whence I infer that he, who appeared of old, was Jehovah, rendering himself visible and accessible to creatures by the borrowed form of a man. Was you at the synagogue last sabbath day?

R. I was.

Y. Do you remember what section of the law Rabbi Samuel read?

R. He read that section, which describes the mission of Moses.† I took particular notice of it.

Y. You did well. The mission of Moses is the most important article in the history of our nation. He undoubtedly related it with the utmost precision. But let us hear the man of God. *THE ANGEL OF JEHOVAH appeared unto Moses in a flame*

of

* Exod. iii. 15.

† Exod. iii. iv.

of fire; out of the midst of a bush. . . and Jehovah said, Draw not nigh hither; put off thy shoes from off thy feet; for the place, whereon thou standest, is holy ground. . . I AM THE GOD OF THY FATHER, THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB. . . Say unto the children of Israel, I AM, JEHOVAH, THE GOD OF YOUR FATHERS, THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, THE GOD OF ISAAC, THE GOD OF JACOB, hath sent me unto you: this is MY NAME for ever, and this is MY MEMORIAL unto all generations. Go, and I will be with thee, have not I JEHOVAH made the dumb, the deaf, the seeing, and the blind? Is it not plain, that he, who sent Moses, was Jehovah?

R. What say the scribes, master?

J. What they say is of very little consequence, for ever since they have left off to take heed to the Lord, and have given themselves up to the enthusiasm of Bath Kol, they have answered the prophet's description, *they see indeed: but perceive not*. † Some of them pretend, that a created angel held this conversation with Moses, and spoke in the name of God, because he was the messenger of God. But they wrest the scriptures. Moses was a messenger of God to our fathers: but would our fathers have bowed their heads and worshipped, if Moses had said *I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob; draw not nigh to me, put off your shoes; and so on?* The language of Moses and the prophets is, **THUS SAITH THE LORD.**

O. We allow then the second fact. He, who appeared to our fathers, was Jehovah.

J. If I rest the evidence of this fact on this section, I do it only for the sake of drawing the subject into a narrow compass; for I could argue from the appearance to Hagar;|| from that to Abraham,

† Isa. vi. 9.

|| Gen. xvi. 1.

Abraham, to whom Jehovah appeared in human form, accompanied by *two* other men, § afterwards called *angels*; * to him our father prayed for Sodom after the two other appearances were gone to inform Lot † of the destruction of that city; and him he called THE JUDGE OF THE WHOLE EARTH. The history of Jacob alone affords sufficient proof. The *angel*, who spoke to Jacob in a dream, called himself THE GOD OF BETHEL; ‡ and the *man*, with whom Jacob wrestled, and to whom he made supplication, is called JEHOVAH, THE LORD GOD OF HOSTS. || There are many more appearances recorded in the same manner. Either he, who appeared, was the true God, or Moses has confounded the creature with the Creator in a manner very dangerous to the honour of the blessed God. God may, and in the nature of things God must, assume a form to render himself visible to mortals. If that form be human, the beholders will naturally say a *man* appeared: but neither man, nor angel, may assume the incommunicable names and titles of God; nor may they suffer themselves to be worshipped; nor may they bless in their own names. Three times Jacob called him, who appeared to him, an angel; once he called him a man; and above thirty times he gave him the titles Jehovah, God. The invisible God did appear to our fathers then, in *human* form.

R. Did he not also appear in *angelic* form, Rabbi?

Y. There is a class of beings, which we call angels, a *little* higher than mankind: § but the word angel is not descriptive of the nature, much less of any supposed form of these spirits; they are

§ Gen. xviii. 1, 2. * Gen. xix. 1. † Gen. xviii. 22.
 † Gen. xxi. 11, 13. xxviii. 13, &c. || Gen. xxxii. 24.
 Hosea xii. 4, 5. § Psal. viii. 5.

are Jehovah's messengers, we know no more of them, and when they have rendered themselves visible, they have assumed a human form. The idea of God manifesting himself to men in the person of a man, is an idea that runs through all the history, and all the prophecies, of our scriptures. This *man* is styled Jehovah's *fellow*,* and the third fact, which I propose to your consideration, is that, which the prophet Micah mentions.

R. The three facts, then, are these. God is an invisible spirit. God, the invisible spirit, assumed an human form, and in it appeared to our fathers, in the early ages of the world. He, who assumed the form of a man, in the early ages of the world, in appearing to our fathers, actually became a man, and was born at Bethlehem-Judah.

J. These are the three facts, the inference is easy. Jesus, who was born at Bethlehem, existed before his birth, appeared to our fathers, and was worshipped by them as Jehovah, the Lord their God. I have, to the priests, and to the populace, repeatedly preferred him before myself, because *he was before me.*† I die contented, because in so doing, according to Gabriel's prediction to my father, I have *turned many of the children of Israel to the LORD THEIR GOD.*‡

O. We are then to conclude from the prophecy of Micah, and from the prophecy of Isaiah, to which Jesus referred us, that he is God-man, the promised Messiah.

J. For my part, I have such confidence in the God of truth, who can have no interest in deceiving us, and whose perfect wisdom renders it impossible for him to want proper words to express his meaning, that one word of his is sufficient to de-
termining

* Zech. xlii. 7. † John i. 15. 27. 30. ‡ Luke i. 16.
This passage, Dr. Clarke allows, belongs to Jesus Christ.

termine my mind on any subject. From the section in the prophet, and from the conduct of Jesus, I reason thus. Isaiah speaks of works to be performed at the coming of JEHOVAH THE GOD OF ISRAEL. Jesus comes, performs the works, and claims the titles, of which the prophet speaks. If there be therefore any fixed meaning in words, any credit to be given to Jesus, JESUS IS JEHOVAH, THE GOD OF ISRAEL. I am not offended. *He cometh from heaven, he is above all, and he, who receiveth his testimony, sets to his seal, that God is true.*

Here I break off this supposed dialogue, my brethren: but I cannot dismiss this article, without remarking one passage more, the quotation of which would give me the most contemptible idea of the writer's abilities, did I not believe that he took Jesus Christ to be God. On the contrary, if he meant to prove the deity of Jesus Christ, I admire his wisdom, for the passage invincibly proves the point. This writer is S. Paul. S. Paul, in the first of Hebrews, elevates Christ above the whole creation, and requires all the angels to adore him. We ask, By what authority do you require the celestial spirits to adore a man? Because, replies he, *God saith, Let all the angels of God worship HIM.* We answer, There is no such passage in the genuine scriptures. There is, indeed, a passage in the ninety-seventh psalm, which saith, *Confounded be all they, that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols: worship JEHOVAH all ye gods, or angels.* But how does a command to worship JEHOVAH apply to the worship of Jesus? If Jesus and Jehovah be not the same, art thou not the least and last of all pretenders to reason?

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Let us hear the psalmist. *THE LORD reigneth, let the earth rejoice : let the multitude of isles be glad thereof. Clouds and darkness are round about HIM : righteousness and judgment are the habitation of HIS throne. A fire goeth before HIM, and burneth up HIS enemies round about. His lightnings enlightned the world : the earth saw and trembled. The hills melted like wax at the presence of JEHOVAH : at the presence of THE LORD OF THE WHOLE EARTH. The heavens declare HIS righteousness ; and all the people see HIS glory. Confounded be all they, that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols ; WORSHIP HIM ALL YE GODS.* The natural impressions, which these passages make on the reader, are these. The psalmist describes the SUPREME GOD, and commands the angels to worship HIM. S. Paul quotes the psalm, applies it to JESUS, and commands the angels to worship HIM. JESUS is therefore, in S. Paul's account, GOD SUPREME.

VII. *Examine, whether events have justified that notion of Christianity, which the prophets gave their countrymen of it, if Jesus Christ be not God.* The coming of the Messiah was foretold by the prophets. The calling of the gentiles from the worship of idols to the worship of the one living and true God is one event, which, the prophets said, the coming of the Messiah should bring to pass. If Jesus Christ be God, the event answers the prophecy ; if not, the event is not come to pass, for Christians in general worship Jesus, which is idolatry, if he be not God. The second, third, and fourth chapters of Isaiah are one continued discourse. The first five verses foretell the advent of the Messiah, and the call of the gentiles. From the sixth verse to the end of the third chapter the rejection of the Jews, and the destruction of idolatry

try are foretold. And the fourth chapter is a consolatory close to the discourse, addressed to the pious Jews. The destruction of idolatry, in the second part, is thus expressed. *The day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon ALL THE HILLS, that are lifted up, and upon ALL PLEASANT PICTURES. THE LORD ALONE shall be exalted in that day. And THE IDOLS be shall utterly abolish.* The prophet calls this *walking in the light of the Lord*; and S. Paul adopts the style, and says to the Ephesians, who had been idolaters, *Ye were sometime darkness: but now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of light.** The prophet Isaiah was not singular in his notion. Another prophet says, *JEHOVAH will famish all the gods of the earth, and men shall worship HIM, every one from his place, even all the isles of the heathen.†* Another says, *THE LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be ONE LORD, AND HIS NAME ONE.‡* A fourth adds, *From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same, MY NAME shall be great among the gentiles, and in every place incense shall be offered unto MY NAME, and a pure offering: for MY NAME SHALL BE GREAT AMONG THE HEATHEN, SAITH THE LORD OF HOSTS.¶* The prophets then intended to make their countrymen understand, that the advent of the Messiah would be fatal to idolatry, by establishing the pure worship of one living and true God. Let us see whether events justify this prediction.

The Reverend Mr. Lindsey affirms, that “all christian people, for upwards of three hundred years after Christ, were generally Unitarians, what is now called either Arian or Socinian.”§ Mr. Lindsey is not singular in his opinion. Some eminent men

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* Eph. v. 8. † Zeph. ii. 11. ‡ Zech. xiv. 9. ¶ Mal. i. 11. § Apol. p. 24. edit. 2d.

in the church of Rome, and some learned divines in the protestant churches, both at home, and abroad, have maintained the same opinion. On the other hand, divines equally learned, and equally credible, have maintained the opposite opinion, and this last class, I think, have embraced that side, which has fewest difficulties in it, and the best arguments to support it. It would be unfair, my fellow christians, to engage you in a question, which must receive its answer from records, that are inaccessible to most of you. The decision, too, very little concerns you; for the rule of your faith is not the uncertain style of the fathers, but the *sure word* of God. You have been taught to answer all questions of this kind with that well known saying of a great man; THE BIBLE, THE BIBLE IS THE RELIGION OF PROTESTANTS.

Our present argument does not enter into this question. We only affirm, what neither side will deny, that let the *belief* of the primitive christians be what it would, their *practice* was to WORSHIP JESUS CHRIST. However they described his nature in their creeds, *worship him* they certainly did.

In proof of this I will adduce three unsuspected witnesses, who, having no share in our dispute, can have no kind of interest in deceiving us. The works of the two first you have in English; and ask any one, who is capable of answering, whether I impose on you in the last. Our first witness is Pliny. Pliny was appointed governor of the province of Bithynia by the Emperor Trajan, in the year one hundred and three. There were christians in that province in S. Peter's time, and he wrote his epistles to them.† Pliny examined, and punished several christians for their nonconformity to the established religion of the empire. In a letter

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to the Emperor, giving an account of his conduct, he declares, *they affirmed the whole of their guilt, or their error, was, that they met on a certain stated day before it was light, and ADDRESSED THEMSELVES IN A FORM OF PRAYER TO CHRIST, AS TO SOME GOD, &c.*† The latin of the latter part of this Dr. Watts has put in the title page of your hymn-books; and probably the Dr. would have rendered the words, *they sang hymns to Christ as to a God.* Both come to the same. Pliny meant to inform the emperor, that christians worshipped Christ.

The established church has inserted one of the ancient prayers in the liturgy. It is intitled, *A prayer of S. Chrysostom*, and runs thus. "ALMIGHTY GOD, . . . who dost promise, that when two or three are gathered together in THY name. . . fulfil now, O LORD, the desires and PETITIONS of thy servants."‖ The reverend Mr. Lindsey changes *thy name* into *thy SON's name*.§ We do not dispute now the propriety of this alteration. We affirm an historical fact. The primitive christians worshipped Christ.

Our second witness is Mohammed. This Arabian impostor lived in the sixth century. (We will return to earlier evidence presently. This, as we shall see by and by, belongs to the question.) In speaking of Christians, he says, *They are infidels; who say, Verily God is Christ, the son of Mary.* Christians say, Christ is the Son of God: may God resist them! They are commanded to worship one God only; though the IDOLATERS be averse thereto.†* In the light of infidels and idolaters he considers christians throughout the Koran; and, indeed, had not

† Pliny's Epistles, book x. epist. 97. ‖ Litany. § Apol. p. 186.

* Sale's Koran, chap. v. entitled, *The Table*.

† Chap. ix. entitled, *The Declaration of Immunity*.

not Christians worshipped Christ, he could have had no shadow of a pretence to reform their religion, and to bring them back to the worship of one God.

Our third witness is Justin Martyr. Justin had been a heathen philosopher, and after his conversion to christianity, he published two apologies for christianity, which he addressed to the reigning emperors, in order to dissuade them from persecuting christians. These apologies are some of the most valuable remains of antiquity. The apologist describes the doctrine, the worship, and the conversation of the christians of his time. *The pagans, says he, tax us with atheism: and, if by atheism they mean a refusal of worshipping heathen deities, we own we are atheists: but, if by atheism they mean a refusal of worshipping any God, we disown the charge. The true God, the Father . . . THE SON . . . and the Spirit WE WORSHIP, AND ADORE, &c.** Christians in Justin's time, that is, about one hundred and fifty years after Christ, worshipped Jesus Christ.

That the far greater part of christians have continued to worship Jesus will not be doubted. The worshippers of the Son of God are not so hard driven to make out a succession as to be obliged to insert the name of *Peter Abelard* of amorous memory. That Abelard, who could with equal facility explain Ezekiel's prophecies, and compose amorous sonnets for Heloise; that Abelard, who was equally free to unfold the doctrine of the Trinity, and ruin the peace of a family, by debauching his patron's niece; that Abelard is put into a list of unitarians by a gentleman of unspotted morality, *in whose eyes a vile person is abhorred.* A proof of the scarcity of unitarians, and

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consequently of the general homage, that christians have paid to Jesus Christ.†

If Jesus Christ be a mere man, the adoration of him is idolatry. Idolatry is either, 1. The worshipping of the true God by a material symbol, or representation; or, 2. The worshipping of creatures, either by forsaking the true God, and serving others only; or by worshipping others together with him. If therefore the bulk of christians have worshipped Jesus, and if Jesus be a mere man only, the generality of christians have fallen into idolatry.

We affirm nothing more in this article than what our opponents allow.

The design of Mr. Firmin was to regain christians to the worship of one God, and the principles on which he went are thus expressed. "1. The great design and scope of BOTH testaments, and the REASON that they were given by God, was to regain mankind to the belief and acknowledgement of BUT ONE GOD; to destroy polytheism OF ALL SORTS. . . . 2. The WHOLE CHRISTIAN CHURCH IS HEATHEN already in the majority of its members."* The first of these facts is allowed on both sides, and the last cannot be denied if Jesus Christ be a mere man. But the silence of both testaments on this horrid corruption of christianity, while the writers of both foretold other corruptions of little or no consequence compared with this, affords a strong presumption that the whole christian church has not injured the unity of God by worshipping Christ: and, if our christianity be that, which the prophets foretold,

† Rev. Mr. Lindsey's Apology, p. 30. After all, Abelard was a trinitarian. See Abelard. Rem. M. in Bayle. The sincere apologist, I dare say, had not attended to Bayle's account of Abelard.

* Rev. Mr. Lindsey's Apology, p. 196, 197.

it is certain, it hath, wherever it came, destroyed *polytheism of all sorts*, regained men to the belief of **BUT ONE GOD**, and the belief of Christ's divinity is not inconsistent with it.

If the apostles did not foresee this idolatrous worship of Jesus, God gave them a less degree of the spirit than he gave Moses; and then what become of all those passages in both testaments, which declare the most plentiful effusion to the apostles? If the apostles did foresee, and did not foretell, this dangerous departure from their doctrine, what become of all their fine professions of *declaring the WHOLE COUNSEL of God*, of *keeping back NOTHING that might be profitable*, of *imparting their OWN SOULS*, and so on? Are not all these rather romantic?

The writers of the new testament, who established a purity of faith and manners in the first churches, foresaw and foretold the corruptions of christianity. In regard to **MORALS**, they said men would become *unholy, beady, high minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God*.† They said also, *In the latter times, some shall depart from THE FAITH, giving heed to the doctrine of DEMONS*.‡ Demons, according to the theology of the gentiles, were middle powers between the sovereign gods, and mortal men. Of these demons there were accounted two kinds. One kind of demons were the souls of men deified or canonized after death. The other kind of demons were such as had never been the souls of men, nor ever dwelt in mortal bodies. These latter demons may be paralleled with angels; as the former may with canonized saints.§ S. Paul therefore foretold, that christianity should be corrupted with the worshipping of

† 2 Tim. iii. 1, &c. ‡ 1 Tim. iv. 1. § See the present Right Reverend Bishop of Bristol's *Dissertations on the Prophecies*, Diss. xxiii.

of saints and angels. These events have come to pass, and they confirm the truth of the gospel, as the devils published of old the mission of Christ. But in what part of the holy scriptures shall we find the least intimation of christians falling into idolatry by worshipping Christ? Those *scriptures, which are able to make men wise unto salvation*; those scriptures, which were given by *inspiration of God, and are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness*; those scriptures, which *make a man of God perfect, and thoroughly furnish him unto all good works,** would they have left us without warning on this dangerous topic? Why did not the founders of christianity, like the Jewish legislator, *call heaven and earth to record against their successors, and warn them against worshipping A NEW GOD, THAT CAME NEWLY UP, whom their fathers feared not.†*

If the worshipping of Jesus Christ, under the sanction of revelation, be idolatry, whether that sanction be real or pretended, it is the most dangerous, because the most specious, kind of idolatry, that ever appeared in the world; an idolatry, that has somehow or other originated in the oracles of God; an idolatry, that has interwoven itself with civil constitutions; an idolatry, that deludes the most upright of mankind; an idolatry, of longer standing than any other; an idolatry, therefore the most likely to remain for ever. Is this the DAY, which *Abraham saw, and WAS GLAD?‡* Was it the approach of this LUMINARY,|| that occasioned the rapturous flights of the prophets? Is this the *reigning of JEHOVAH before his ancients gloriously?§* Is this the *making of new heavens, and*
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* 2 Tim. iii. 15. † Deut. xxxi. 24---29. xxxii. 15---25.
‡ John viii. 56. || Mal. iv. 2. Luke i. 78. § Isa.
xxiv. 23.

a new earth, wherein dwelleth **RIGHTEOUSNESS?*** Is the **THRONE**, from whence laws proceed, that *make all things new*, filled by an usurper?† And is the name, whereby **HE** shall be called, **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS?**‡ O thou immortal, invincible only wise God! rather than suffer thy glory to be thus obscured, cover the doating prophets with confusion! Perish christianity with all its gaudy splendor! Give us back Judaism! Return us Moses, who was *faithful in all thy house!*

If the gospel have destroyed idolatry; if it have secured the lives, the properties, the honours, the civil and the religious liberties of mankind; if it have illuminated the minds, purified the hearts, and saved the souls of millions of men; it deserves all the encomiums given it by the prophets. Where are the thirty thousand gods that were worshipped in Greece in Elisha's time?|| Are they not *cast to the bats, and the moles?*§ Where are the nineteen beasts in human shape, who were enslaved by every twentieth lord?* Who *opened their blind eyes* to their dignity, and brought these *prisoners out of the prison house?*† The Lord Jesus came forth as a mighty man; he stirred up jealousy like a man of war; he cried; yea rored; he prevailed against his enemies. He brought the blind by a way that they knew not, he made darkness light before them.‡ Well may the wilderness, the cities, the villages, the caves, give glory to **Jehovah-Jesus**, and declare his praise in the islands.

If we allow that Jesus Christ hath destroyed idolatry, although he is worshipped himself, the
errors

* Isa. lxxv. 17. lxxvi. 22. † Rev. xxi. 5. ‡ Jer. xxiii. 5, 6. || So Hesiod reckoned them, and he lived in Elisha's time. See Potter's Antiquit. vol. i. book ii. chap. 1. § Isa. ii. 20. * Potter, vol. i. book i. chap. 10. † Isa. xlii. 7. ‡ Isa. xlii. 13. 16. 11, 12.

errors and vices of the christian world will appear few in comparison of those, which abounded in the heathen world ; and, compared with the benefits derived from the gospel, they are only like spots in the sun.

VIII. *If Jesus Christ be not God, you will be obliged to allow, that Mohammed has written more clearly on the nature of Christ, than the apostles have, and that the Turks, who reject the gospel, have clearer notions of the nature of Jesus Christ, than christians have, who receive and study it.*

Inspired writers.

Mohammed.

*The word was God.**

They are INFIDELS, who say, God is Christ.*

JESUS IS THE BRIGHTNESS OF GOD'S GLORY, and THE EXPRESS IMAGE OF HIS PERSON.†

Christ the Son of Mary is no more than an APOSTLE.†

He shall be called the SON of God.‡

Christians say Christ is the SON of God. How are they infatuated ! ‡ Far be it from God, that he should have a SON.

Jesus Christ is LORD OF ALL.¶

Jesus is no other than a SERVANT.¶

When Peter confessed, *Tbou art Christ, the Son of the living God*, Jesus answered, *Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.** With much the same view S. Paul said, *The church of the living God is the pillar and ground of truth.†*

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* John i. 1. † Heb. i. 3. ‡ Luke i. 35. ¶ Acts x. 36.
* Sale's Koran, chap. v. *The Table.* † Chap. v. ‡ Chap. ix. *The Declaration of Immunity.* Chap. iv. *Women.* ¶ Chap. xliii. *Ornaments of Gold.* * Matt. xvi. 18. † 1 Tim. iii. 15.

ever in the church, Jesus Christ promised his disciples to be *with them alway even* UNTO THE END OF THE WORLD.* *The spirit of TRUTH*, said he, *whom THE WORLD CANNOT RECEIVE, dwelleth with YOU, and shall be in you, he shall ABIDE WITH YOU FOR EVER.*† But if the generality of christians believe the divinity of a mere man, they believe a lie, and the *spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive*, has forsaken the christian church, and dwells in the mosques of a vile impostor.

It may be said, Mohammed taught the unity of God. The unity of God is truth, and if one truth dwell with an impostor, why may not another? We answer, The unity of God is discoverable by the light of nature; it is a truth of natural religion: but the doctrine of Christ's person is a truth of revelation. Of the truths of revelation Christ and his apostles speak. The generality of christians understand a truth of revelation in one sense. Mohammed and his followers understand it in a contrary sense. A high degree of probability is against the latter.

Lastly. Consider what numberless passages of scripture have no sense, or a very absurd one, if Jesus Christ be a mere man. To give a few instances. *Jesus Christ was made of the seed of David according to the flesh.*‡ What a strange expression! It might as well be said, Paul was made of the seed of Benjamin according to the flesh. What would such a saying mean?

Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh.§ According to the principle, which we oppose, S. Paul says, *Great is the mystery of godliness.* What? God made a very wise man. A great mystery indeed!

He, that hath seen me, hath seen the Father.|| That is, He, that hath seen me, hath heard my doctrine.

* Mat. xxviii. 20. † John xiv. 16, 17. ‡ Rom. i. 3.
§ 1 Tim. iii. 16. || John xiv. 9.

*O Father! glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory, which I had with thee before the world was.**

According to the notion, which we oppose, our Saviour means, Glorify me with the glory, which was decreed for me before the world was. As well might Paul have said, when he was shipwrecked, save us on boards and on broken pieces of the ship, with that safety, which we had with thee before the world was.

Jesus Christ, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.† That is, say some, Jesus, not being God, thought not of the robbery of being equal with God. Glorious humility! A creature did not think of ranking himself with the creator! The humblest effort of the wisest human mind was only not to equal itself with Jehovah!

The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand . . . thou art a priest for ever.‡ That is, say some, *the Lord Jehovah said unto king David, Thou art, of all the sons of men, my principal favourite, who hast free access to me.* In vain have learned men objected, David could not say of himself, *The Lord said unto my lord*; nor did he *sit at the right hand* of God, exalted above men and angels; nor were all *his enemies subdued* under his feet; nor did they, whom he conquered, pay him a *willing* obedience; nor was he an *everlasting priest*, or an *everlasting king*; nor was his dominion *extensive* over the nations and the Gentiles.¶ In vain, I say, have learned men objected these difficulties; the former is an improved sense, for it keeps most out of sight the idea of *worshipping David's Lord*. Consequences dangerous to favourite opinions might follow. One might enquire, *who is David's Lord?* David might

* John xvii. 5. † Phil. ii. 6. ‡ Psal. cx. i. 4. ¶ Ruarus, and some other Socinians, propose and adopt this interpretation. See Dr. Jortin's Remarks on Ecclesiastical History, Vol. iii.

might reply, *My soul! thou hast said unto JEHOVAH, THOU ART MY LORD;* § and a third might urge, *David speaketh in the sixteenth psalm, concerning JESUS of Nazareth; * the ROOT of David; the bright, the morning star; THE LORD GOD OF THE HOLY PROPHETS, who sent his angels to testify these things in the churches.* †

Take another example from the same psalm. *He, Maxentius and his host—shall drink, shall be drowned—of the brook, in the river Tiber—therefore shall be, Constantine—lift up his head, triumph over Maxentius.* * † This is the exposition of that truly great man, Le Clerc: but, take away his name, and what has it to recommend it? When Mr. Whiston applied a part of the Revelation of S. John to prince Eugene's wars, and procured his calculations to be presented to the prince; the generous prince politely rewarded the author for his labour; protesting at the same time, he never knew till then, that he had the honour of being known to S. John. It is very questionable whether Constantine, and Maxentius, had the honour of being known to David.

God forbid, we should tax these expositors with wilfully perverting the word of God; like Abimelech, *in the integrity of their hearts* they speak and act: † but, when the best of men adopt a favourite notion, eagerness to communicate what gives themselves so much pleasure, too often takes place of every other consideration, and their conduct frequently reminds us, that the *integrity* of an expositor and the *truth* of his exposition are two very distinct things.

We

§ Psal. xvi. 2. * Acts ii. 25. † Rev. xxii. 6. 16. * Psal. cx. 9. † Jortin. Rem. vol. iii. † Gen. xx. 5. 6.

We will illustrate this remark by two passages from the worthy, and reverend, Mr. Lindsey. These are his words.†

“ Rev. v. 13. *Blessing and honour, &c. be unto him, that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever. The blessing and honour is tendered to the object* PRESENT and VISIBLE.” But we have observed in S. Stephen’s case, that idolatry doth not consist in worshipping an *invisible* object. The *visibility* and the *invisibility* of the object have nothing to do with the nature of the act. Is a papist less an idolater when he worships the host exposed to view than when he worships the same host inclosed in a pix?

“ The object, says Mr. Lindsey, was *not upon the throne : but standing before the midst of the throne.*” The *posture* and the *place* of the object have nothing to do with the nature of the act. According to this reasoning, when *the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with Moses on the mount,*|| he was not an object of worship, he was not on the throne. If sitting on the throne entitle Jesu to adoration, why is not our dispute ended? Does he not say, *I am set down with my Father in his throne?**

Mr. Lindsey goes on, “ *The reason also, which is assigned for this worship being paid him.*” How! worship paid to Jesus Christ! I protest, were I reading an apology written as long ago as Justin Martyr’s, I should suspect copyists of interpolating. I should think the manuscript had passed through Athanasian hands, and greatly needed emendation. For, in the *contents* of this very apology, and in the *margin*, I read, *Religious worship to be paid to God the Father ONLY, AND NOT TO OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.* Who would imagine that the author meant *Religious worship to be paid to our Lord Jesus Christ,*

† Apol. p. 130. || Exod. xxxiv. 5. * Rev. iii. 21.

Christ, and a HIGHER DEGREE of it to the Father ONLY.

Mr. Lindsey farther adds, “ *The ascribing glory and honour to Christ, does in NO DEGREE imply him to be God, or AUTHORIZE THE WORSHIP OF HIM, or prayer to him. It is no more than a declaration of our reverence of him, and high esteem of his most perfect moral character and goodness: We may, therefore, and we ought on all proper occasions to join with his apostle in saying, 2 Peter iii. 18. TO HIM BE GLORY BOTH NOW AND FOR EVER.*” Christ’s most perfect moral character deserves an ascription of glory to him *both now and for ever*. By parity of reason every degree of moral rectitude merits some ascription of glory to its possessor. I think, the author of the apology hath a great degree of moral rectitude: but I dare not say, *Glory be to THE APOLOGIST!* I dare not say, *Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto PAUL, and unto MOSES, and unto GABRIEL.* I do not reason on the *force of the terms*. I reason thus. There is a doxology in the old testament composed by an inspired man, and by him appropriated to the blessed God.* It is profane to praise a creature in the form of that doxology.

Mr. Lindsey goes on. “ *1 Tim. i. 2. I thank Jesus Christ our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry. This is no address of thanks to Christ as an object of worship, but a sudden emotion of gratitude in the apostle’s mind, and expression of his thankfulness to Christ for his own miraculous conversion, Acts ix, and call to be an apostle.*”

The question is not whether these words proceeded from a *sudden*, or a *slow* emotion; S. Paul was inspired to write them. IT IS AN *expression of his*

* Compare 1 Chron. xxix. 11. with Rev. v. 13.

his thankfulness to Christ: but it is no *address of thanks to Christ* as an object of worship. But this is taking for granted what ought to have been proved. We say, S. Paul gave praise to *Jesus Christ* his Lord for a certain blessing, which God had bestowed on him. Mr. Lindsey says, S. Paul gave praise to *Jesus* for the blessing: but he did not praise him as God. We ask the proof.

Were it necessary, we could prove from Mr. Lindsey's own concessions that Jesus Christ is God. "*S. Paul thanked Christ for his own miraculous conversion, and call to be an apostle.*" Christ, then, converted Saul, and conferred on him the apostleship. But one Ananias, a devout man, having a good report of all the Jews, who dwelt at Damascus, declares, that *the Lord*, EVEN JESUS, who appeared unto Saul in the way, was THE GOD OF THEIR FATHERS. THIS LORD appeared to Ananias, and sent Ananias to tell Saul, that he might be filled with the Holy Ghost.* If there be two truths clear in the holy scriptures, they are these; S. Paul ascribes his conversion to God: S. Paul thanks Christ for his conversion. The last proposition Mr. Lindsey allows; the first S. Paul repeatedly affirms. One passage may suffice, GOD, WHO COMMANDED LIGHT TO SHINE OUT OF DARKNESS, *bath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.* If there be such a thing as drawing a fair inference from sure premisses, we may certainly conclude that S. Paul thought Jesus Christ was God.

Let us recapitulate these articles, and let us see the insuperable difficulties, which attend the denial of the divinity of our Lord.

The new testament writers taught the heathens to call Jesus Christ God; however, they only meant to

to inform them, that Jesus Christ was an extraordinary *man*. They knew the heathens had for ages been accustomed to deify every extraordinary man; they intended to eradicate this idolatrous custom; and they undertook to do it by putting into their hands the history of a *man*, whom they called *God*, and to whom they ascribed more and more beneficent *acts*, than poets, philosophers, and historians, had ever thought of ascribing to heathen *deities*.

The writers of the new testament described Jesus Christ to the Jews, a people zealous to superstition of every name and title of the one living and true God, by those very names and titles, by which that nation had for time immemorial described *God*; however, they only meant to inform the Jews that Jesus was an extraordinary *man*.

The writers of the new testament ascribed to Jesus Christ those attributes and perfections, which no mortal had ever pretended before to ascribe to any but to the *Almighty God*, and they did this in order to shew that he, who possessed these perfections, was a great *man*.

The writers of the history of Jesus declare that he created the world, and that he preserves it; that he redeemed the church, and that he sanctifies and saves it; that he is the master of all, and that he shall be the judge of all mankind. All these works, the performance of which requiring infinite perfections, had always been ascribed to *God*, these writers ascribe to Jesus for the sake of convincing the world that he was an extraordinary *man*.

The writers of the new testament actually worshipped Jesus Christ *THEMSELVES*; they said *THE FIRST MARTYR* died invoking him; they declared that *ALL THE ANGELS of God* were commanded to *worship him*; they said, they saw *ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands round about* the

the throne, and heard them say, Glory and honour be unto the Lamb for ever and ever; they required EVERY KNEE to bow at the name of Jesus, every knee in heaven, every knee in earth, and every knee under the earth; they demanded this homage to be paid to Christ by men, who had always protested against the paying of such homage to any but God; however, they never intended to persuade men to worship Jesus as God, they only meant to procure a high degree of veneration to him as a very great man.

The writers of the new testament applied a great many prophecies, which foretold works to be performed by Almighty God, to Jesus Christ; they fixed on certain events in his life, and they declared, that the production of these events was the accomplishment of the forementioned prophecies: yet they did not mean to insinuate that Jesus was *God Almighty*, they only meant, that the doing what the prophets had said another should do proved him to be the servant of that other, and a very extraordinary *man*.

The prophets had foretold that Jesus should destroy idolatry; and bring men to worship the one living and true God of Israel: Jesus and his apostles endeavoured to fulfil these predictions; but without their foreseeing what would happen, the disciples of Jesus worshipped him, a *man*, and not the *God* of Israel, and the bulk of christians have continued to do so for upwards of seventeen hundred years, and are likely to do so to the end of the world.

The Lord Jesus encouraged his followers to believe that the spirit of truth should abide with them for ever: yet it appears by the event, that Jesus Christ did not include in the promise that first great truth of christianity, on which all the rest are

founded, the doctrine of his *person*; the Turks are in possession of this truth, the generality of christians have lost it. It is a point, which christians have always studied in those records, which are alone capable of informing them; it is a point, which Turks have never studied, being destitute of records, and of inclination to procure them; and yet the Turks are in possession of the true notion of Christ's person, and the generality of christians have embraced a false one.

Finally. A great many expressions peculiar to revelation are easy and natural, if the divinity of Christ be allowed, which, if Christ be a mere man, either have no meaning, or a very absurd one; and yet Jesus is a mere man, and the expressions in question are capable of a very proper meaning by the help of learned and critical remarks, which criticisms, although essential to the understanding of those expressions, can never be understood by those plain readers, for whose sakes the expressions were written.

I appeal to any one of you, my brethren, whether the doctrine of our Lord's divinity be embarrassed with any difficulties equal to these; and whether these considerations ought not to induce us to allow S. John's proposition, *He, who was made flesh, was God.*

A christian, who admits the truth of this proposition, walks in a plain and easy path. He reasons thus. The inspired writers call Jesus God: Therefore he is God. The writers of the new testament describe Jesus by the same names, titles, attributes, and works, by which the prophets described God: Therefore he is God. Jesus is worshipped by all the host of heaven: Jesus teaches his followers to do the will of God on earth as it is done

done in heaven: Therefore I will worship Jesus on earth, as the angels worship him in heaven.

Some Gentlemen have seen the evidence of this proposition, and have been forced to allow, that Jesus is God: who yet have endeavoured to explain the meaning of it away, and have allowed him only a delegated deity. Let us take a little circuit in order the more effectually to discover the truth. We will suppose a plain honest man endeavouring to obtain a right notion of the doctrine of our Saviour's person, with only the help of scripture, and common sense. We will give him six propositions to examine, and hear his conclusions.

PROPOSITION I.

Jesus was an *Impostor*.

If Jesus were not a good and virtuous man, he was certainly a *very* wicked person. A man, who could act that part in the world, which he did, must have been either virtuous or vicious in an *extreme*. Now I am able to prove that a mind extremely depraved by vice could not have comprehended, much less would it have recommended, such a morality as Jesus Christ taught. Jesus must have been a serious thoughtful VIRTUOUS MAN.

PROPOSITION II.

Jesus was a *good man*, and taught a better morality than any other philosopher had taught.

Jesus was a GREAT as well as a good man. A long succession of prophets foretold his coming. His advent was announced by miraculous events. His life was a perpetual display of beneficent works, and after his death he rose again, and ascended to heaven. Societies, formed under his direction, embracing his doctrine, and practising his precepts, have extirpated innumerable errors and vices, that

had for ages destroyed the happiness of mankind. Of him princes have learned humanity, judges equity, the rich liberality, and the poor content. Of him scholars have learned their noblest sciences, and the most effectual motives and means of pursuing them. Of him mankind learned to esteem the amiable, to pity the wretched, and to take all their species for their brethren; a science, that few philosophers imagined, and which none of them could persuade the world to receive. From him the greatest moral good has proceeded; him therefore I esteem the wisest, the greatest, the best of mankind, *the first-born of every creature.*

PROPOSITION III

Jesus was an *extraordinary man*, who lived in the reign of Tiberius.

Jesus Christ was not only an extraordinary man, he was a *SINGULAR* person. That is affirmed of him, which cannot be affirmed of any other person. He not only lived in the reign of Tiberius, he lived long before his appearance in the flesh. He came down from heaven;† he came forth from the Father, when he came into the world;‡ He was before Abraham;|| he had a glory with the Father before the world was.§ He was before all things, and all things, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers, were created by him.* Our Saviour therefore existed before his incarnation.

PROPOSITION IV.

The human soul of Jesus existed before his assumption of flesh.

Jehovah,

* Col. i. 15. † John vi. 38. 62. ‡ John xvi. 27; 28. || John viii. 58. § xvii. 5. * Col. i. 17. 16.

Jehovah, who stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundations of the earth, always formeth the spirit of man WITHIN HIM;† And the man Jesus was made in ALL THINGS like unto his brethren.‡ The scripture no where affirms the pre-existence of the human soul of Jesus, and had it pre-existed, it could not have created the world, for the scriptures expressly declare, that creation is above human power. The man Jesus must therefore be united to a NATURE MORE THAN HUMAN; he must be a complex person. Hitherto the term Jesus has been put for a person consisting of both the constituent parts of a true and perfect man; hereafter it will include the idea of another nature superior to the human, and united to it: but of what rank I have not yet determined. Let me advert to the next proposition, and let me forget that it was laid down by a right reverend and learned minister of Christ.¶

PROPOSITION V.

The *Archangel Michael*, as a superior spiritual existence, was united to that system of organized matter, which served our Lord in quality of a body, performed the offices of a reasonable soul in it, and gave him his supreme dignity as The Son of God. This tutelar angel of the Jews often appeared to the patriarchs and prophets.

There is in nature a scale of being, one creature riseth above another in excellence. A vegetable excels a stone, an animal excels a vegetable, a rational being excels a mere animal, and so on. This idea is preserved in scripture, *there are celestial bodies, and there are terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. §* The scriptures assign to man a place *above all other animals,*

† Zech. xii. 1. † Heb. ii. 17. ¶ Lord bishop of Clogher in Ireland, § 1 Cor. xv. 40.

animals, and below angels. *Thou hast made man a little lower than angels, thou hast put all other beings under his feet.** This is the rank of the human nature of Jesus, who was made a little lower than angels.† But Jesus hath a nature superior to the human, it seems; is this superior nature angelic? or is it superangelical? of what order is it?

S. Paul determines it to be SUPERANGELICAL. *The Son is the brightness of God's glory, the express image of his person, being made, that is to say, being accounted by so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. Unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come. He took not on him the nature of angels. Unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my SON. If the word spoken by ANGELS was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the LORD.* According to S. Paul then the man Jesus hath a nature superior to that of angels, he styles him on that account *The Lord, the Son.†* Farther, S. Paul saith, *unto the SON, Thy throne, O God! is for ever and ever. SON! LORD! God! God of an eternal throne!* This is the nature then, which existed before the man Jesus; this is he, who took flesh, that is to say, who took the human nature into union with himself; this is he, (for who so likely?) this is he, who appeared to the patriarchs, not the tutelar angel of the Jews, but the God, whose throne is for ever and ever, the sceptre of whose kingdom is a sceptre of righteousness.‖

PROPOSITION VI.

God may create an infinite series of spiritual agents, in subordination one to another; some of which

may,

* Psal. viii. 5, 6, &c. † Heb. ii. 9. ‡ Heb. i. 2. ‖ Heb. i. 8.

may, by an authority communicated to them from the supreme God, *act as Gods* with regard to inferior beings. God *may* enable such a one to create a world. Jesus Christ *is* a being of this kind; He is a DELEGATED GOD.

I am not a philosopher exercising the speculations of my uncertain reason to form a conjectural proposition: I am a christian endeavouring to come at the meaning of an infallible proposition, which, I allow, is laid down by God himself. My concern is not with what God *may* do: but with what he declares he has done. His deity is his glory, hath he given it to another? *I am Jehovah, and THERE IS NONE ELSE; there is NO GOD BESIDES ME. A just God and a Saviour, THERE IS NONE BESIDES ME. I am God, and THERE IS NONE LIKE ME. IS THERE A GOD BESIDES ME? YEA, THERE IS NO GOD, I KNOW NOT ANY.** This is the God of my bible: but, besides this God, there is, in my proposition, *another* God, a delegated God. Here are TWO GODS. Here is a supreme God, and a subordinate God; a natural God, and an artificial God; a great God, and a little God; a philosopher has one God, a Jew has one God, a christian, it seems, has two GODS. What a world of difficulties belong to this proposition? Is this delegated God entitled to worship? The idea of a God without a title to religious worship is an idea inadmissible. Is all worship to be paid to the subordinate God, or does the supreme God claim any? Which acts of devotion belong to the one, and which to the other? A mistake would be dangerous, and I have no guide. Every inspired writer forsakes me. Jesus Christ, it seems, *created all things that are in heaven and in earth, visible and invisible*, and a creator, it seems, proves, by creating, *his eternal power and Godhead.*† The proposition

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says,

* Isa. xlv. 5. 6. 21, xlvii. 9. xlii. 8.

† Rom. i. 20.

says, God may empower a creature to create. Perhaps he may. But God declares he hath not done so. *Who measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span? who comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance? Lift up your eyes on high, and behold, WHO HATH CREATED the heavens? Why sayst thou, O Jacob! My way is hid from the Lord? Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard that THE EVERLASTING GOD, THE LORD, THE CREATOR OF THE ENDS OF THE EARTH fainteth not, neither is weary? who hath directed the spirit of the Lord, or being his counsellor hath taught him?** I am then obliged to reject the notion of a subordinate God, a delegated creator; and to admit that the one living and true God united himself to the man Jesus for the purpose of displaying his glory and thereby of communicating felicity to men, the lowest order of intelligent beings. In Jesus the divine nature and the human are united, and therefore the complex person Jesus is styled God. Thus I have *one God, and one mediator* between God and men, *the man Christ Jesus.*† As God he requires and accepts a mediation; as man he mediates, and *presents TO HIMSELF a glorious church, holy, and without blemish.*‡ *Without controversy great is the mystery of Godliness—God was manifest in the flesh.*||

Thus far, my brethren! revelation conducts the plain christian traveller; here it stops; and, as he, who goes forward, must travel either without a guide, or with one, who is ignorant of the road, we ought not to be astonished if he lose his way. Happy for christians, had they rested here without *philosophical explications!* Were this a proper place, (but I am not writing on the doctrine of the Trinity)

* Isa. xl. 12. 26, 27, 28. 13. † 1 Tim. ii. 5. ‡ Eph. v. 27. || 1 Tim. iii. 16.

nity) I believe, it would be very easy to prove, that the primitive christians received this simple testimony, just as revelation gave it; and that when, about 200 years after Christ, they began to practise the art of explaining what they did not understand, they produced a novel notion called a trinity, and with it disputes, creeds, subscriptions, proscriptions, persecutions, wars, and other calamitous consequences, which have disgraced christianity, and divided christians from that day to this.

A SCRIPTURE TRINITY undoubtedly there is; but our present concern is with our Lord's divinity: and had a primitive christian been catechised, I believe he would have answered in some such manner as this.

Quest. Are christians atheists?

Ans. No. We believe a God, who is a spirit, and we worship him in spirit and truth.*

Q. Do christians worship more gods than one?

A. No. The heathens have *lords many, and gods many*: but christians have *but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him, and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.*†

Q. Who is Jesus Christ?

A. *Jesus Christ is a man.*‡ *Jesus Christ is God.*||

Q. Do christians think, that the man Jesus is deified?

A. The deification of creatures forms a science which they call demonology. Christians consider demonology or the *doctrines of demons* as the doctrines of seducers, and in the latter times some will depart from the faith by giving heed to them.§

Q. Do christians worship Jesus Christ?

A. We do not worship the man Jesus: but we do worship the God, who dwells in the man; for

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* John iv. 24. † 1 Cor. viii. 5, 6. ‡ 1 Tim. ii. 5.
|| John i. 1. § 1 Tim. iv. 1.

*in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily;**
and through him we have access by one spirit unto the
Father.†

Q. Do christians think that the Father is the Godhead of Jesus?

A. No. We think, *Jesus, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God.†*

Q. Do not christians then worship two gods?

A. We abhor the thought. We say with the Jews, *The Lord our God is one Lord; for there is one God, and there is none other but he.‖*

Q. Is not this a little mysterious?

A. *The acknowledgment of the deity, both of the Father, and of Christ, is a mystery in which are treasures of wisdom and knowledge.§*

Q. Do not christians believe, that their scriptures unfold mysteries?

A. We believe that our scriptures have unfolded a thousand mysteries: but we do not believe that they unfold the mysterious nature of God; *treasures of wisdom and knowledge ARE HID in it.** Our scriptures are intended to inform us more what God is to us than what he is in himself.

Q. Do christians believe then what they cannot comprehend?

A. They do, and so do all the rest of mankind. *God doth great things, which men CANNOT COMPREHEND.† His way in the sea, his footsteps in the great waters are NOT KNOWN; is it strange that his way in the sanctuary should be mysterious?‡*

Q. Why do christians concern themselves with incomprehensibles?

A. They act in religion as men act in the world. They know not the *nature*; but they do know the

use,
 * Col. ii. 9. † Eph. ii. 18. ‡ Phil. ii. 5, 6. ‖ Mark
 xii. 29, 32. § Col. ii. 2, 3. * Col. ii. 3. † Job xxxvii. 5.
 ‡ Psal. lxxvii. 19. 13.

use of objects. A man may be a good mariner, who can neither account for the saltness of the sea, nor for the action of the air.

Q. Does not the christian faith discard reason?

A. God forbid! Reason asks and obtains evidence that God speaks, and faith believes what he says. Is it irrational to believe him, who *cannot lie*?* A believer admits the *evidence of things NOT SEEN. By faith Noah, being warned of God of THINGS NOT SEEN AS YET, prepared an ark. By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed, and he went out, NOT KNOWING WHITHER HE WENT. All the patriarchs died in the belief of a proposition, of which they had but obscure and imperfect ideas.†* A philosopher speculates objects with his own eyes; a believer beholds them, as it were, with the eyes of God himself. A christian neither hides his reason in a napkin, nor drives an illicit trade with it; he puts it into the hands of the best exchanger, and receives his own with usury.

I repeat it again, my brethren, the primitive christians rested in the SIMPLICITY OF REVELATION, and they were wise in doing so. This accounts for, what may appear very strange, the abundance of quotations, which Dr. Clarke on the one side, Dr. Waterland on the other, and Dr. Whitby on both, have brought from the primitive christian writers in proof of their own systems. The truth is, the primitive christians had never heard of their theses, they had never thought of anatomizing God, and therefore they said nothing about it. When it became the fashion for every body to EXPLAIN what nobody understood, forth came torrents of impenetrable jargon, great swelling words of no meaning, and for these christians became gladiators, and fought, and that, which had been said to

* Titus i. 2, † Heb. xi.

to the worst of the Jews, was too often said to the best of christians, *Thou shalt die by the sword!*

In these fatal disputes, that faith, which prevailed at court, was orthodoxy for the time: but very little regard was due to such orthodoxy, however wise it might be called, or however popular it might become. "*Public wisdom,*" says a great man,* "*public wisdom is a mere Proteus, and, not to consider it in pagan or Mohammedan countries, amongst the Jews it once was the wisdom of Ahab and Jezebel, and afterwards of Annas and Caiaphas, and in christian regions it hath appeared in an hundred shapes. It sets out with a great shew of religion: it begins with the gospel according to S. Matthew; and it often ends in the gospel according to Mr. Hobbes.*"

Here I was going to put a period to this letter: but three questions, which will naturally occur, seem to require answers. You will probably ask, How is it that wise and worthy men mistake this scriptural notion of Christ's divinity, and maintain erroneous opinions about it? Next, Is this doctrine free from all difficulty, and liable to no objection? And lastly, what conduct ought a christian, who believes the divinity of Christ, to observe to one, who doubts or disbelieves it?

First, How is it that wise and worthy men mistake this notion of Christ's divinity, and maintain erroneous opinions about it?

A full answer to this question would require a perfect knowledge of all the operations of the human mind in investigating truth, of all the influences, that the tempers of the heart have over the operations of the mind, and of all the circumstances, which colour the objects of our meditation. Of this know-

knowledge I am destitute, and therefore my answer will account for only a few, of many, causes of error on this article.

1. Men mistake by not distinguishing objects of pure revelation, from objects of natural reason, and therefore they confound believing with reasoning. I am not required to believe any thing about the moon; it is a sensible object, and I am to look at it, and to reason about it. God requires me to believe the deity of Jesus Christ. Deity is an invisible object. I never saw, nor ever conceived an object analogous to it. I cannot reason about it; I believe it.

2. Men mistake by subjecting God to laws, which actually prevail in some cases, but which, we dare not say, prevail in all. The reverend Mr. Lindsey says, "*Christ's character as mediator is UTTERLY INCOMPATIBLE with the practice of making him the object of religious worship. He CANNOT be God, and the minister of God.*"* Is Mr. Lindsey sure of this? Were we to grant, that nothing like this passeth among men, would it certainly follow, that nothing like this passeth in heaven? The possible world is a region unexplored, and it is rash to say God CANNOT be this, he CANNOT do that. S. Paul writes as if he thought God could do this. *God hath accepted us in the beloved.† We labour to be accepted of Christ.‡ Christ will present a glorious church to HIMSELF.¶ THE GREAT GOD, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, GAVE HIMSELF for us, THAT HE MIGHT redeem us from all iniquity, and PURIFY UNTO HIMSELF a peculiar people.§*

3. Men mistake by affixing modern ideas to ancient terms. Every sensible writer considers ideas as the souls of words, and words as bodies, or as sensible objects, which express invisible ideas to the senses

* Apol. p. 126, 127. † Eph. i. 3. 6. ‡ 2 Cor. v. 9, 10.
 ¶ Eph. v. 27. § Titus ii. 13, 14.

senses of others. As far as the poverty of materials will permit, such writers adapt expression to meaning. The sign remains for centuries, the thing signified by the inventor of the sign is volatile, and escapes, and each beholder first throws his own image upon the sign, next receives the reflection of it, and last imputes the same signification to the inventor of the sign. S. Paul had some determinate meaning under the word, which we render PERSON, and which he applies to GOD :* But he had a different meaning under the same word, when he applied it to FAITH, and therefore we translate it SUBSTANCE ;† and he used the same word in a sense different from both the former, when he applied it to BOASTING, and therefore we render it CONFIDENCE.‡ What are we doing when we dispute about ancient detached terms impregnated with modern meaning ? are we not fighting for a country, which belongs to neither of us ? If there be such a thing as coming at a *writer's* meaning, we must do it by a careful attention to *his* scope, before the birth of our system. Should a word appear vague, indeterminate, obsolete, fight for it who will, he is the wisest man, who leaves it where he found it.

4. Men mistake by turning plain literal words into tropes and figures. By this kind of learning they disembowel religion, and present us with a gospel as gay, as hieroglyphical, and as dead as an Egyptian mummy. The gospel, as the Lord Jesus left it, was a *word quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, discerning the thoughts and intents of the heart* :|| that is to say, it was a body of doctrine animated with grand motives, with the dignity of its author, the horror of its penalties, the united efforts of justice

* Heb. i. 3. † Heb. xi. 1. ‡ 2 Cor. ix. 4. || Heb. iv. 12.

justice and love, displayed in the death of the cross, and in the immediate bestowment of heaven after death. But by the help of a certain art called Rhetoric, this body is killed for the sake of being embalmed. Jesus is a metaphorical God, hell is an eastern allegory, the devil is a prosopopeia, the atonement is a thing called a metonymy, the wicked are annihilated, and the virtuous sleep without dreaming till the heavens are no more. There can be no better canon of interpretation, than that which an amiable prelate* has given us; scripture is to be taken in that sense, in which the common people, who heard it at first, took it. Assuredly the common people never thought of these senses!

5. Learned men, who are ashamed to think with the populace, mistake through their dexterity at criticism. Criticism is a most valuable branch of literature; but, like every thing else, it is liable to abuse. One half of criticism is to find a fault, the other half to mend it; and many undertake the last, who are only capable of the first. An Atheist turns critic, and relieves me from the difficulties, that attend natural and revealed religion: but, having freed me from these, he gives me the more, and the greater, difficulties of Atheism to digest. I dispose of the mysteries of christianity: but I receive in return the mysteries, the absurdities, and the impossibilities of atheism. A sober christian critic removes my difficulties on a certain passage of scripture, which regards, suppose, our Lord's divinity: but he obscures and perplexes a thousand other passages, which ascribe to him more than humanity.

I wish I knew how to give you, without foreign words, a just notion of the futility of those criticisms, on which much of this controversy turns. The plainest example, that occurs to me at present,

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* The present Right Reverend Lord Bishop of Carlisle.

is the famous passage in Acts, [vii. 59.] which describes S. Stephen addressing Jesus Christ. The text, as we read it in the English testament, is thus, And they stoned Stephen, calling upon *God*, and saying, Lord Jesus receive my spirit. This reading affords us a full proof of Christ's divinity, for the martyr prays to Jesus, and calls him God, and the most eager opposers of the divinity of Jesus allow, that the reading, were it genuine, would prove the point. But, say they, S. Luke wrote in greek, not in English, and the original ought to be examined. You observe, my brethren, that the word *God* in the text is printed in the pale italic letter. The translators hit on this plain way of informing a reader, who did not understand the language, in which any part of scripture was written, what original words had corresponding words in English, and what words had not. All words printed in the black roman character correspond to the original words, and all in the pale italic letter are added by the translators to make up, what they supposed, the sense. We allow the critic's reason for examining the original to be just. He examines, and renders the text thus, They stoned Stephen, who was calling on (invoking) and saying, Lord Jesus receive my spirit.* This is a criticism! The word *God* is got rid of, and the text, it seems, must be read, *Stephen was calling on and saying, Lord Jesus receive my spirit.* Far be it from me, my dear plain brethren, to make your ears tingle with the sounds of verbs active, verbs passive, verbs transitive, verbs neuter, and so on: but permit me to ask you, Do you not feel the want of a word in the new translation? *Stephen was calling . . . calling on whom? say you.* Well! here is another reading, *Stephen was invoking and saying, Lord Jesus receive my spirit.* Now, what will

* So Mr. Purver reads it, in Mr. Lindsey's apology p. 129.

will you do with this word *invoking*? If you look into a small English dictionary, (God grant you may never be driven to dictionaries to understand your biblies!) you will find, *to invoke, is to call upon*; and if you go to a large dictionary, you will learn that there is a theological invocation, and a poetical invocation, and, in short, that to *invoke* always signifies *to call upon*. You still ask, Whom did Stephen invoke, on whom did he call? The old translators knew you would ask these questions, and having read that they were *workers of iniquity, who called not upon God*,* that God had said to every pious Jew, consequently to Stephen, *Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me*;† and that *whosoever should call on the name of THE LORD should be saved*; the translators, I say, for these just and weighty reasons, put in the word *God*: *Stephen was calling upon God, &c.*

Moreover, the old translators knew, that the christians of S. Stephen's time invoked, or called on Jesus as God. One example of their invocation shall suffice at present. *The Lord EVEN JESUS, who appeared unto Paul in the way, SENT Ananias to comfort Paul. To the Lord, who sent Ananias to comfort Paul, Ananias said, All here, that is to say, All the christians at Damascus, CALL ON (invoke) THY name.*‡ Ananias exhorted Paul to *be baptized, and wash away his sins, CALLING ON (invoking) the name of the Lord.*|| Paul obeyed, and afterwards expressed this invocation in these words, *I WORSHIP THE GOD OF MY FATHERS, after the way which the Jews call heresy.*§ The old translators therefore had the highest reason for inserting the word *God*, and the present criticism is futile and of no value. It happens to a verbal critic in turning over greek

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* Psal. liii. 4. † Psal. l. 15. ‡ Acts ix. 17. 14.
 || Acts xxii. 16. § Acts xxiv. 14.

dictionaries, as it happened to you in turning to English vocabularies; there is only one article, in which you differ; yours is a modest ignorance, his is a proud one, yours lies naked, his is concealed under high sounding words. A sound critic is not an exchanger of words: but he is an investigator of things.

When the reverend Mr. Lindsey lays aside his too modest deference to favourite names, and allows himself to make use of his own good sense, he investigates things, and, although it involve his argument in contradiction, yet he grants the godhead of Jesus Christ. I will take the liberty to place two passages in the *Apology* in contrast, and remark the conclusion.

1. Melancthon thought, and justly as it should seem, that Prayer is the highest act of worship, the proper honour of GOD, and peculiar to HIM ALONE.*

2. The principal argument for Christ's divinity is to be fetched from religious worship and prayer being addressed to him.†

1. Unquestionably Stephen made this request, addressed this prayer to the LORD JESUS.†

2. Unquestionably Stephen made this request, addressed this prayer to the Lord Jesus.‖

Mr. Lindsey adds, "If there be no authority for praying to Christ, as we have shewn there is not, the divinity of Christ falleth of course." Of which conclusion we beg leave to offer the following emendation, as a sense, which the scope absolutely requires. If there be S. Stephen's authority for praying to Christ, as Mr. Lindsey has shewn there is, the divinity of Christ is established of course.

Time

Time would fail, were we to attempt to enumerate the sources of the mistakes of good men, and I close this article with one more, which, I fear, is too common. Disputants will not do justice to the terms used by their opponents. We are blamed for praying to Jesus Christ. The terms Jesus Christ are sometimes put for only the *man*, who was born of the Virgin Mary, *consisting of soul and body*. Sometimes they are put for only *God*, who united his nature to that of the son of Mary. And sometimes they are put for that complex being consisting of both a divine and human nature, who is styled Emanuel God with us. The last is the usual meaning of the terms. To him we pray, not to his soul, not to his body, nor to both united; prayer to either would be idolatry: but we pray to God, who hath united himself to the man, and in whom he dwelleth with all *the fulness of the Godhead*. If we will not distinguish these objects, we may dispute without end. An error may be attacked, which nobody believes; a practice may be condemned, which nobody performs.

You ask, next, Is the doctrine of our Lord's divinity free from all difficulty, and liable to no objection? Give me leave to answer this by laying down three undeniable propositions.

1. There never has been a system of religion proposed to mankind free from all difficulty, and liable to no objection.

2. Christianity is a system of religion, that hath the least difficulties, and is liable to the fewest objections.

3. Atheism is clogged with more difficulties, and liable to more objections, than any religion in the world.

The part of a rational creature, therefore, is to embrace the christian religion. We apply this reasoning to the present controversy. A doubt ariseth about

about the nature of Jesus Christ. Two opposite propositions lie before me, and each has its difficulties. I take that, which has fewest.

For example. There are many passages in the new testament, which express the inferiority of Jesus Christ to the Father. *My Father is GREATER than I. All power is GIVEN unto me. Of that day knoweth no man, no not the angels, NEITHER THE SON: but the Father.* If I embrace the doctrine of Christ's mere humanity, I meet with no difficulties in two of these texts, and but a few in the middle one. But all those passages, which say he is God, he is *equal with God, he created all things*, and so on, become extremely difficult, and actually inexplicable and intolerable. Perceiving that my difficulties encrease by embracing the doctrine of Christ's mere humanity, I turn to the doctrine of his divinity, always remembering that this retains the whole doctrine of his humanity, and gives me a new idea of Christ, before which most of my difficulties vanish. I have no difficulties on those passages, which express his inferiority, for, in my system, he is, as man, inferior to the Father. I have no difficulties on the other passages, which express his dignity, for, in my system, he is God, equal with the Father. A difficulty remains, indeed, but it does not lie in my bible, it is transferred in this system to the *object*; and this is no difficulty at all to me. I know so little of the infinite mind, and so much of my own imperfection, that I am not surprised, that I, an insect of yesterday, that I, glimmering and guessing through a few feeble organs, that I, confined to a little narrow contracted sphere, that I should not be able to comprehend the essence of him, who *boldeth back the face of his throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon*

it. The Lord spoke the ten commandments unto all the assembly of Israel out of thick darkness, and added no more.† The Lord said, He would dwell in thick darkness, even to a Solomon.‡ Why then should any man be ashamed to say with a prophet, Verily thou art a God, that hidest thyself; O God of Israel, the Saviour?||*

To close. You ask, What conduct ought a christian, who believes the divinity of Christ, to observe to one, who doubts, or disbelieves it? Before I answer this, permit me to transcribe, from a great man, § what he ought *not* to do.

“ In the fourth century were held thirteen councils against Arius, fifteen for him, and seventeen for the Semiarrians; in all, forty-five.

“ How could the Arians, in the time of Constantius and Valens, bring themselves to such an unchristian persecuting temper? How could they oppress their fellow christians the Consubstantialists, who, supposing them to have been in an error, fell into it through a religious fear of ascribing too little to their Redeemer, and of not paying him sufficient honour? Can a man love his Saviour, and hate his brother for a mistake of this kind?

“ And how could the Consubstantialists persuade themselves that an Arian, who perhaps had suffered for professing christianity in times of distress, who believed Christ to be his Maker, his Saviour, his King, and his Judge, would *chuse* to detract from his dignity, and to offend him in whom he placed all his hopes of salvation? Human nature is not capable of this folly, and if the man was in an error, yet in such a person the error must have been

* Job xxvi. 9.

† Deut. v. 22.

‡ 1 Kings viii. 12.

|| Isa. xlv. 15.

§ Dr. Jortin's Rem. on Eccl. Hist. vol.

been involuntary, a mere defect of the understanding, and not a fault of the will.

" A christian, and a lover of peace, who lived in obscurity, and whose name I cannot tell, stood up, and said ;

" My brethren ! The things to be believed are few, the things to be done are many ; but you behave yourselves, as if the reverse of this were true. S. Paul tells us, *The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearance of the great God, and (of) our Saviour Jesus Christ.* Concerning the nature of Jesus you can dispute incessantly, and concerning the word *grace*, you will probably dispute no less ; but the rest of the sentence you disregard as of small consequence or importance. What, I beseech you, must the Jews and pagans conceive of you and of your religion ? And what do the holy angels think, who look down upon your contentions ? These blessed and compassionate spirits pity you, and think you mere children. But when from contending, you proceed to beating your fellow servants, to persecuting and destroying, they consider you as most malicious and wicked children ; their pity is changed into indignation, and they would strike you dead, if the Supreme Governor did not stay their hand, and remind them that such disorders must needs arise, and shall one day be rectified."

" So said this *unknown* ; but behold the consequence ! The Consubstantialists called him an Arian, and the Arians called him a Consubstantialist."

A peaceable

on A peaceable christian, who lives in an age of dispute, has but two ways before him. Either he must enter into all the violent measures of the combatants on one side; or he must suffer the reproaches of both. The former is not very easy to a man of a pacific mind; it would be a punishment to him to spend his precious time in hovering over a dispute, first to extract the venom of the controversy, and last to spit poison in the faces of those, who for conscience sake support it. Beside, he could not undergo the fatigue of learning all the hard long frightful names, which fiery controversies call one another, and which, by the way, he takes for a kind of scholastic billingsgate; lest still could he bear the reproaches of his own conscience, which would sometimes say to him, *No doubt you are the man, and wisdom shall die with you. Will you speak wickedly for God, and talk deceitfully for him? Should your lies make men hold their peace, and when you mock shall no man make you ashamed? O that you would altogether hold your peace, and it should be your wisdom!* And least of all could he sustain the thought of looking the Judge of the whole earth in the face at the last day, who, he fears, would cut him asunder and appoint him his portion with unbelievers, were he to beat his fellow servants. † A case, in which a man must incur either the displeasure of God, or that of his fellow creatures, is easily decided. He must then speak his sentiments, and determine to submit to the reproaches of both.

There is indeed a middle way. There is an art of subscribing one thing and believing another; of preaching that a part is greater than a whole, and believing that a whole is greater than a part: but this art transforms the grave minister of Christ into

to the fantastic harlequin of the stage; and an honest man, however he may laugh at a trick on the theatre, is shocked at the idea of a knave in the church.

But both sides will reproach him! Be it so. Their reproaches will inflame his zeal for moderation. Let us suppose a modest christian adopting our notion of Christ's divinity, freely delivering his sentiments upon it, and thereby exposing himself to the ungovernable reproaches of zealots on both sides; could he not, think you, peaceably reply to their invectives.

You hold the divinity of Christ, says one, you are unfashionable; it is the modern mark of a genius to explode it. Beside, you are impolitic; were you as dull as an ass, you would be reputed learned and wise, if you renounced this vulgar error. The modest man would reply, Carnal policy is no part of christianity. Fashion in religion is no law to me. I have no ambition for the reputation of genius and learning. Such a reputation might be a misfortune to me. It happens to the wise, as it happens to the rich. The reputation of being rich only fills the house with beggars. Scalliger was reputed learned and communicative, and he was plagued with finding solutions to the difficulties of so many dunces, that he wished he had never been taught to write. My ambition is to please God. May I do that, and I shall be content.

You believe the divinity of Christ, says another; all your arguments are old, and have been answered a hundred times over. He would reply, Novelty and antiquity weigh nothing with me on this article; truth is all in all. God is my witness, I have endeavoured to divest myself of prejudices. I have turned the subject on every side. I have followed

followed evidence without knowing, and without caring, whither it would carry me. I have felt no unkind emotions in examining the arguments against my thesis. I have bowed my knees to the Father of glory, and have prayed him to enlighten the eyes of my understanding, and to grant me the spirit of wisdom in the knowledge of him.* But after all I think the old arguments demonstrative, and the answers inconclusive.

O, says a third, you cannot be so ignorant as you pretend to be. You have read the great Dr. Clarke! Have you never seen those critical dissections of texts by learned men, which explain all the passages, that seem to support your nostrum, and prove that they are all on the opposite side? He would beg leave to reply. I have read Dr. Clarke, and a hundred doctors more; and I have read also a saying of one, who, although he was no graduate, was greater than they all. He says, *Call no man your master upon earth; for one is your master, even Christ.*† Yes, I have seen many a critical anatomist dissect a text: but, while he instructed me in occult science, he destroyed that general pleasing effect, which the Creator had produced by the whole. You can never persuade me, that an article, so important as the doctrine of the object of our worship is allowed to be, lies concealed in the depths of erudition. The belief of Christ's divinity is an effect, I think, produced by the features of the face of revelation, if you will pardon the expression. I have all the veneration for Dr. Clarke that I ought to have: but, in my opinion, I could make more converts to the belief of the being of a God with an oyster and a nettle, than he could with his mathematical propositions.

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* Eph. ii. 14. i. 17, 18. † Matt. xxii.

tions. Mathematics and criticisms may confirm a wise man in religion: but we be to the religion, that hangs upon them.

You cannot worship God, says another, if you believe the divinity of Christ, without either distracting and dividing your mind between two or three objects, or conceiving clearly of none. What ideas, replies the modest man, you may have affixed to my terms, I know not: but I find no more distraction of mind in worshipping one God, the mode of whose subsistence is unknown to me, through the man Jesus Christ, than I do in talking to you. Some philosophers think, the body is a kind of covering thrown over the soul, at once to serve its useful purposes in this life, and to conceal its nature till the next. This life is for action, the next for speculation. It was wise in God, when

do you think so? he came down upon mount Sinai in the sight of all the Jews, to set bounds unto the people, to forbid their touching the mount under pain of death, and to charge the priests and the people not to break through unto JEHOVAH, to gaze. These precautions were proper. Without them curiosity would have banished reverence, and the little minds of the beholders would have lost all inclination to listen and adore.

I suspect, exclaims another, a little collusion. You certainly question the truth of that doctrine yourself, which you persuade others to believe. I abhor collusion, replies our respondent. I have mildly told you that I think you a most worthy man: but that by applying your rules of elucidation to a proposition, which is not subject to them, you have fallen into an error. Is nobody honest but he, who abuses you? And must I knock you

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on the head to convince you that I am in earnest?

Zealots on the other side beset the poor man. What a strange divinity of Christ you hold, says one. Why don't you explain it by the Athanasian creed, or by some approved system? Because, answers he, I don't understand it well enough, and because creeds do not satisfy me. Would you have me explain what I do not understand?

Why do not you persecute, at least with the tongue, those monstrous unitarians? Because I have no warrant from Christ to do so, nor the least inclination to forge one.

This is well enough. But why do you praise them in every company? Because a mistaking man may merit praise for that very industry, which has led him into an error, and for that integrity, which makes him, against his interest, support it.

But what occasion is there to keep company with them, and to maintain an intimacy with them? Because on every other article they edify me, and on this we agree to differ. In the possession of this truth, I think I have the advantage of them. In regard to many others, I am not worthy to speak to them, I glory in being their disciple.

In what light then do you consider a sincere man, who denies our Lord's divinity? In the light of a mistaking brother; in every other attitude an object of esteem, and in that of denying the divinity of my Lord an object of my tenderest compassion.

All this argues great coldness to your Lord! I would rather be frozen into a formalist than inflamed with the fire of hell; in the first case I should be a harmless statue, in the last a destroyer like the devil.

I rejoice

I rejoice, my brethren, that I am neither teaching you a new doctrine, nor exciting a new temper in defending it, and I say these things only for the sake of confirming your faith and practice. Go on, and prosper. *Peace be within your walls, and prosperity within your palaces.** Contend earnestly, but not uncivilly, *for the faith once delivered to the saints.†* Pity those christians in every church, who plead the cause of Christ with penal arguments, who go into the house of their God, and eat, and drink, and curse Abimelech.‡ Remember, the primitive christians were happy till they began to attempt to EXPLAIN the nature of Christ. Profit by their mistake, and may the precious things of the earth and a fulness thereof, with the goodwill of him, who dwelt in the bush, come upon the head of each of you, and of every one, who for conscience sake hath been SEPARATED from his brethren!|| So prays your affectionate pastor,

ROBERT ROBINSON.

* Psal. cxxii. 7. † Jude 3. ‡ Judges ix. 27. || Deut. xxxiii. 16.

P O S T.

I rejoice

P O S T S C R I P T.

PROOFS and ILLUSTRATIONS.

IN arguing for the divinity of Jesus Christ, in the foregoing Letter, I have taken several maxims for granted, and have not attempted to prove them. As the people, to whom the Letter is addressed, allowed these maxims, I had a right to suppose them: but, as the Letter may possibly fall into the hands of some, who may doubt or deny them, it may not be impertinent to subjoin a few proofs and illustrations, explaining what may doubtful, and proving what may be denied.

In general I have taken for granted the following propositions.

I. The books of the old and new testament were given by divine inspiration.

II. The inspired writings contain all things necessary to be believed and practised in religion.

III. The words, by which the inspired writers expressed their ideas, are to be understood in that sense, in which the people, to whom they wrote, generally understood them at the time of their writing, unless notice be given of the contrary.

IV. The belief of a proposition does not necessarily imply a clear idea of that object, of which the proposition affirms any thing.

As these maxims are interwoven with the whole argument, I shall not consider either of them apart: but shall follow the order of the letter, and throw in the proofs of them promiscuously, as the articles in question require.

Page 9. *Compare the language of the new testament with the state of the pagan world at the time of its publication.* It is here supposed. 1. That God communicated true ideas of religious

ligious objects to the apostles. 2. That the apostles intended to convey these ideas to the pagans. 3. That for the purpose of conveying their ideas, they preached and wrote to the pagans. 4. That the apostles used terms, to which the pagans had been accustomed before their time, and which were then in common use among them. 5. That the apostles affixed such ideas to the terms, as the pagans affixed to them. And lastly, that they transferred ideas, known to the heathens under those terms, to an object, who had been before unknown to them, that is to Jesus Christ. It would require a volume to discuss these articles fully: but I shall only explain myself briefly by the following remarks.

1. The heathens had a notion of a being superior to human; which they called *θεός*, god; *θεότης*, divinity, deity; *θεοειδής*, something divine; *το ον*, the being, &c. and, they thought, a man might as well deny the being of the sun, as the existence of such a deity. *Qui dubitet, haud sane intelligo, cur non idem sol sit, an nullus sit, dubitare possit.**

2. The contracted minds of the pagans could not admit the grand idea of one infinitely just, infinitely wise, infinitely powerful, and all present God. In one sensible object they discovered a particular display of wisdom, in another of power; in one event they perceived a mark of more than human justice, in another of more than human goodness: but, not being able to form an abstract idea of wisdom, justice, goodness, or power, they divided their obscure idea of divinity into endless ideas of displays of it, and what we call an attribute of God, they called a god, with the addition of a form, and thus their *θεός* was broken and dispersed into *θεοί*, gods. Hesiod talks of three myriads, or thirty thousand of these deities.

Τρεῖς γὰρ μυρία θεῶν, &c.†

3. The pagans, having accustomed themselves to consider divinity under a form, and to circumscribe it in an action, added demons and heroes to the number of deities, and in general called the whole multitude *θεοί*, gods, distinguishing them however from *men*. Hence Aristotle exhorts his rhetorician to distinguish what he affirms of a god from what he affirms of a man; *Ἡ ἀνθρώπου ἢ θεοῦ ταῦτο τοῦτο δεῖν.*‡ A priest, says he, would not suffer his son to declaim in public to the people, because, said he, if you inculcate just maxims, *ἀνθρώποι, men*, will hate you, and, if you teach unjust ones, *θεοί, the gods*, will abhor you. The priest, adds he, might as well have said, Declaim in public, for, if you inculcate just maxims, *θεοί, the gods*, will love you, and if unjust ones, *ἀνθρώποι, men*, will respect you.¶

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* Cicero de Nat. Deor. lib. ii. cap. 2. edit. Dav. † Hesiodi op. et dier. i. 250. ‡ Arist. Rhetor. lib. ii. cap. 23. ¶ Cap. 24.

4. The pagans, having an idea of order, and unity of design, in nature; and supposing that order could not be maintained without government, and that the best kind of government was monarchical, (I speak of the earlier Greeks) imagined such a government among the gods, and attributed supremacy to one, whom they called Jupiter; hence Homer's Πάτερ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε, * *father of gods and men*. Hence Orpheus,

Αἰθερὸς ἡδ' αἶδον, ποῖός γαίης τε τυραννί.

Ὁς ἑρπύλαις στυγίᾳς ἑριστὸν δομὸν ὑλμπτοιο,

Δαίμονες οὐ φρίσσουσιν, θεῶν δὲ δεδοικεν ὄμιλος.

Tyrant of heaven and hell, of earth and sea! &c.†

Hence Aristophanes, Ὁ Ζεὺς βασιλεὺς. O Jupiter, *king*, &c.†

From this popular notion Isocrates derives an argument for monarchical government, Τῆς θεῆς ὑπὸ τοῦ Διὸς βασιλευσίδαι. || We ought to prefer a monarchy before a republic, says he, because, according to our own conjectures, and according to an ancient opinion, the gods prefer a monarchy, and Jove is their king.

5. All the terms, which the pagans use of God, express two or three general ideas. Sometimes they are put for an obscure notion of what we call deity, unoriginated and eternal; sometimes for what we call an attribute of God; and sometimes for an operation or influence, that governs an event. Having no clear ideas of these things they used their terms in a vague and indiscriminate manner. Longinus uses θεῖον, θεῖον, and δαίμονιον promiscuously. § Aristotle says, δαίμονιον εἶναι εἶναι, ἀλλ' ἢ θεῖον, ἢ θεῖον εἶναι. * Socrates was accused to the Athenians of not worshipping the gods, θεῖς, which the city worshipped, and of introducing new deities, δαίμονια; and Xenophon clears him from the charge by proving that he did sacrifice both abroad and at home to the city gods, and consequently, that he did introduce no new δαίμονια. He uses the terms δαίμονιον and θεῖον promiscuously. †

6. The apostles used the term θεῖον in the same sense, in which the heathens used it, that is, they expressed by it the idea of a creative governing being superior to man. By giving it to one, and to one only, they collected all the pagan notions of wisdom, power, justice, and goodness, into one general idea, and affixed that idea to one single object. By asserting the spirituality and invisibility of the deity, they refined the idea of θεῖον from whatever of the gross, and the human, the heathens had mixed with it. When S. Paul went to Athens, he saw the city wholly given to idolatry; He saw

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* Homerus passim. † Poet. min. Orph. b. 1, 2, 3. † Nub. v. 2. || Orat. 3. ad Nicoc. § De Sublim. sect. ix. * Rhetor. lib. ii. cap. 24. † Xenoph. Memorab. lib. i.

an altar inscribed to the unknown god; *Αγνωστο Θεω*; And, addressing himself to these idolaters, he said, *ΟΝ ου γνωσκετες ευσεβετε, WHOM ye ignorantly worship, ΤΟΤΟΝ εγω καταγγελλω υμιν, HIM I declare unto you.* GOD, who made the world, and so on. He quoted the poet Aratus, who, speaking of the heathen JUPITER, says, *We are HIS offspring,* and added, *Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of GOD, we ought not to think that the GODHEAD is like unto gold;* and so on.

The same apostle went along with Barnabas to Lystra. The people said, *The Θεοι, the Gods, Jupiter and Mercury, are come down to us in the likeness of men.* The apostles replied, *We preach to you, Sirs! that ye should turn from these vanities unto the Θεοι, Ουσα, the living God.†* The same S. Paul says to the Corinthians; The pagans have Θεοι, gods many, and κυριοι, lords many: but to us christians there is but one Θεο and one κυριος.†

7. The heathens understood that the biblical writers used the terms, in the same sense, in which they themselves used them, that is, in the general sense, which has been mentioned. Longinus considered Homer and Moses speaking of the same being, whom he calls Θεοι, δαιμονιοι, δαιμονια, Θεο, Θεοι. This critic thought Moses's Θεο synonymous to Homer's Αιδωνυς, Πανδαιων.†

Let us now apply these remarks to the subject in hand, the divinity of Jesus Christ. We will suppose the Revelation of S. John to fall into the hands of a pagan, and we will give him the first chapter to consider. Three things we select, 1. The circumstances attending the vision. 2. The titles given to the person, who appeared. 3. The foretelling of events, that were to happen.

1. The circumstances. The vision is introduced with a thunderclap, called a voice of a great trumpet; *Signa venisse Deum.* The heathens introduced their deities in like manner.

— iterum atque iterum fragor intonat ingens.

— Troius heros

*Agnovit sonitum, et Divæ promissa parentis.**

Jupiter was accounted the Thunderer by excellence.† Octavius dedicated a temple to him at Rome under that Title. And, from the common notion that thunder indicated the presence of a God, Horace took occasion to pay this fine compliment to Augustus.

Cœlo tonantem credidimus Jovem

Regnare: præsens divus habebitur

Augustus,

* Acts xvii. † xiv. † Cor. viii. † Long. Sub. sect. ix. † Ovid Metam. Lib. i. Fab. vi. l. 38. * Virg. Aeneid. Lib. viii. 557, &c. † Cic. de Div. 2. † Sueton. in Vit. Octav. 29.

Augustus, adjectis Brittannis.

Imperio, gravibusque Persis, &c. §

The same may be said of the other circumstances, and a pagan, having read these circumstances, would naturally expect the descent *τινος θεου*.

2. The titles given to the person, who appeared. The writer calls him *ὁ ὢν*,* answering exactly to Plato's *το ὢν*,† *the being*, *αὐτὸν ἀπαρῶν*, the cause of all things. The person appearing is called *ὁ ὢν*, *ὁ ὢν*, *ὁ ἐρχομενος*, a being, *who is*, *who was*, *who is to come*. The pagans had applied similar titles to their deities, and had inscribed them on the portals of some of their temples. †

The writer calls the person appearing, *ὁ παντοκράτωρ*; *ὁ κυριος*; *ὁ ἀρχων τῶν βασιλείων τῆς γῆς*; *τὸ Α*, *καὶ τὸ Ω*; *ἀρχὴ καὶ τέλος*; *ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος*; *ὁ ὢν ἐς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων*. By all which titles a pagan, who had not been previously taught that he must not think so, would undoubtedly have understood, that the writer was describing the descent of a god.

3. The foretelling of events. He, who appeared, commanded the writer, *ἱσχυρον α . . . μάλ्लει γινεσθαι μετὰ ταῦτα*. The pagans pretended to predict future events: but they distinguished between the foresight of an event, and the means, by which they obtained their foreknowledge of it. The latter, they thought, were the entrails of beasts, the flying of birds, and so on; the former they ascribed to God. *Efficit in avibus divina mens*, says Cicero; *Quod bellum susceptum sine consilio deorum est* †. The same distinction was made by the greeks. Socrates, and others, thought, *θεους διὰ τοιούτων αἰνῶν συμβαίνειν*. §

To these remarks we might add another on the symbols, that are mentioned, such as the KEYS *τῶν ἀδύων καὶ τοῦ θανάτου*; which the pagans had assigned to Pluto,* or Hades, *εἰς θεος, εἰς δαίμων*, says Plutarch, &c: but the former are sufficient to prove that a pagan must have understood the writer as speaking of a God. I do not ask the reader to grant that Jesus is hereby proved to be the *supreme* God; I only ask him to allow, that a heathen would have thought S. John was speaking of a nature more than human; a celestial god, a terrestrial god, a demon, a deified hero, if he will; and this being granted, which cannot be denied, I reason thus. The writer was inspired, and he expressed his ideas in terms the best known, and the most proper to convey his own meaning. A heathen, who had an obscure idea of God, taking the terms in their unforced sense, received from them an idea of a deity. Jesus

§ Horat. Carm. Lib. iii. Ode 5. * Rev. i. 8. † In Timæo et Epist. ii. § 1. Euseb. Prepar. xi. 10. Plut. de Iside et Osiride. ‡ De divinatione. § Xenoph. Memorab. i. 1. * Diodor. Sic. Lib. v.

Egyptus fame, nisi monitu ejus rex edicto servari per multos annos fruges jussisset; tantaque experimenta ejus fuerunt, ut non ab homine, sed a deo responsa dari viderentur. Filius ejus Moses fuit, quem *præter paternæ scientiæ hereditatem etiam formæ pulchritudo commendabat.**

4. Moses committed his ideas of God and religion to writing. *Moses* quo sibi in posterum gentem firmaret; *novos ritus*, contrariosque ceteris mortalibus *indidit.*†

Tradidit arcano quodcunque volumine Moses.‡

5. The Mosaic code of laws including the genealogies of the families in the kingdom, the laws of the state, the ceremonies of religion, and several other articles of constant use to the whole body of the nation, was preserved with the utmost care by the Jews. The book was their philosophy, their divinity, their history, their policy, their all; and they paid an attention to it corresponding to its importance. *Hi ritus*, quoquo modo inducti, *antiquitate defenduntur*; cætera instituta sinistra, foeda, pravitate valere.||

Quidam sortiti metuentem sabbata patrem,
Nil præter nubes, et cœli numen adorant;
Nec distare putant humana carne suillam,
Qua pater abstinuit: mox et præputia ponunt;
Romanas autem soliti contemnere leges,
Judaicum ediscunt, et servant ac metuunt jus,

Tradidit arcano quodcunque volumine Moses.§

Eosdem reges et sacerdotes haberent; quorum *justitia religione permixta*, incredibile quantum coaluere.*

6. The inspired writings of the Jews are come down to us free from any mistakes, that affect their general meaning. "A great number of various readings, interpolations, luxations, omissions, transpositions, and the like, have crept into the text: but they are all of such a nature, as neither to affect the *essentials* of religion, nor the authenticity of the christian revelation."†

7. The Supreme Being, although he is described in the Jewish scriptures by several names, which, being vague and indeterminate, are applied to inferior natures, is yet described by one name, which is incommunicable to creatures; and those names, which we call vague, are rendered so distinct by the construction of the passages, in which they occur, that there

* Just. Hist. xxxvi. 2. † Tacit. Hist. v. 4. ‡ Juven. Sat. xiv. 102. || Tacit. Hist. v. 5. § Juven. Sat. ubi supra. * Just. ubi supra. Grot. de Veritat. Rel. Christi. i. 14. † Dissert. on the Canons necessary for the right and accurate Interp. of the N. Test. p. 67, 68. Clerici Ant. Crit. Testam.

there is no danger of mistaking their meaning. The number of these names is ten.

8. The name JEHOVAH, which the Jews call the ineffable, incommunicable name of God, was a name, which, agreeably to the authoritative claim of God,† was never given to creatures. The Jews respected this name even to superstition; they never pronounced it; they always wrote another name instead of it; they denounced terrible anathemas against all, who should venture to utter it; they even believed, that the angels were not allowed to sound it; they preserved the name entire to God, and generally called it *ἑρμῆς τετραγράμματος*, the name of four letters.† The heathens adopted their language, and swore by *τοῦ τετραγράμματος*.||

9. The Jews reasoned, that as the names יהוה, and אלהים, no where occurred in precepts for sacrificing; but, on the contrary, the incommunicable name [יהוה] was invariably inserted by the legislator; it was clearly indicated, that whatever honours they might pay to creatures, who were sometimes called *Elohim*, they might not offer sacrifices to any, but to the most high God, the Creator. In copiosa sacrificiorum descriptione nusquam occurrit nec יהוה, nec אלהים, sed INEFFABILE NOMEN *ἑρμῆς τετραγράμματος*, QUOD EST DEI PROPRIUM usurpatur vocabulum DEI PRÆPOTENTIS PROPRIUM, quo manifestum fieret RERUM CREATORI, non numint commentitio sacrificari, &c.¶

Collecting these facts, entering by them into the genius of the Jewish nation, and endeavouring to think and speak like an ancient Jew, in order to find out his meaning; we put the forecited first chapter of Revelation, written by a Jew, into the hands of a Jewish reader, and we think it clear to a demonstration, that the circumstances, the titles, and the prophecy, contained in that chapter, excite the idea of Jehovah.

The circumstance of *thunder*, that of *falling at the feet of the speaker as dead*, and others similar, would certainly have afforded a Jew a presumption that the vision was a vision of God. The description of the speaker is evidently taken from the seventh chapter of Daniel, where THE ANCIENT OF DAYS is described by the prophet; no Jewish writer would have described any but God in this manner, and, if one had been found so negligent, every Jewish reader would soon have detected him. But, to omit all the other evidences for brevity sake, we will remark only one title given to the speaker.

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Hieron. Epist. 136. ad Marcel. † Exod. iii. 13. &c. † Drus. de Nom. Tetrag. cap. x. Joseph. Antiq. ii. 5. † Pythag. Aur. Carm. Selden de Diis Syris. Synagoga. cap. 3. † Rab. Abarbanelis Exord. Comment. in Levit. caput iv. De Sacrif. fine.

20 The Jews, it is well known, having lost the use of their pure native Hebrew tongue, had a Greek translation of their bible in high repute among them. The new testament writers all quoted scripture from this translation.* All the Greek churches, to whom S. John wrote, had no other copy. The translators of this Greek bible had rendered the incommunicable name *o wr.* The Lord said to Moses, *Ego egi & wr.* The person appearing to S. John quotes this passage, and says to John, *Ego egi & . . . o wr, i & o wr, i & o ppoia & .* Imagine a Jew under the awe of these prohibitions, and declarations, *Thou shalt not take the NAME of Jehovah thy God in vain . . .* *o wr is my name FOR EVER, and my memorial unto all generations; I am Jehovah, that is my name, and my glory will I not give to ANOTHER, neither my praise to graven images.*† Imagine, I say, a Jewish writer putting this name into the mouth of his hero in order to excite in a Jewish reader the idea of a mere creature, if you can. The carnal Jews thought Jesus a mere man; the converted Jews thought him God. The latter took the sacred titles of Jehovah and gave them to Jesus; and the former have hated them with a cruel hatred for it, and have persecuted them as blasphemers of the God of heaven for almost eighteen hundred years.

Page 14. Compare the perfections, which are ascribed to Je-
sus Christ in the new testament, with those, which are ascribed
to God in the old.

They, who deny the divinity of Jesus Christ, consider this article as sophistical, and perpetually exclaim; "It is *ignotatio elenchi*; we deny to Jesus Christ no other attributes, than those which are INCOMMUNICABLE, and of these you can never prove Jesus Christ in possession."

Let us endeavour to understand one another, and let us go deep enough, that we may fairly and clearly see on what we build.

1. God is a simple uncompounded Spirit.
2. Our idea of God is complex, made up of many simple ideas obtained by reflection.
3. The difference of our idea of the Supreme Spirit, God, and our ideas of other spirits, lies in the idea of infinity, which goes to make up our complex notion of God: but which is excluded from our complex notions of other spirits. Were it allowable to join the idea of infinity to our other ideas, which compose our complex notion of a created spirit, we should confound the idea of a creature with that of the Creator, and there would remain no certain rule to distinguish the indepen-

* Walton. Prolegom. Prideaux Connect. b. i. p. 2. † Exod. xx. 7. iii. 15. Isa. xlii. 8.

dent self-existent Cause from other spirits. The divinity of an attribute therefore lies in its infinity.

4. Strictly speaking there are not several perfections, or attributes in God; but there is one general excellence, inclusive of all perfections: when therefore we form an idea of one divine attribute as distinct from another divine attribute, we form an idea, which hath no real archetype; it is only a peculiar mode of thinking, which the immensity of the object, and the narrow limits of the mind render necessary. If then I can find a being, who possesseth what I call one attribute, I may assure myself that he possesseth all divine attributes, or, more strictly speaking, that he hath that general excellence, of which I speak, that is to say, he is God.

5. It implies a contradiction to affirm that God can communicate a divine, that is, an infinite, perfection, to a creature; for, on such a supposition, the idea of finite, which distinguishes a creature from God, would be absorbed and lost in the idea of infinity, which distinguishes God from every other spirit; and I could then affirm all of the creature that I could affirm of God. It may be said, No; in the supposed case, the Supreme Cause hath an underived, independent excellency, and the divine creature hath only a derived, communicated excellency; the First Cause hath not communicated his self-existence, and on that account he is supreme, and the other subordinate. My answer should be taken from the foregoing self-evident truth. I would say, There is no such thing in nature as one divine attribute distinct from another divine attribute, and when you have proved, that he, whom you call a divine creature, possesseth what you call one divine attribute, you have thereby proved, that he possesseth that general excellence, which constitutes the nature of God, and consequently independence and self-existence.

6. There is, (if I may express my meaning so) a REAL and a RELATIVE infinity. Real infinity belongs to God alone. Relative infinity may belong to one creature in regard to another. I possess an infinity of ideas in regard to my canary-bird; and an angel possesseth an infinity of wisdom in regard to me: but all infinity, relative or real, is consistent with the nature of the being in question. If I suppose, an angel hath an extent of duration and thought beyond human, I suppose an expansion suited to his nature: but were I to suppose an angel present at two places at one and the same time, I should either destroy my idea of an angel, or I should suppose an impossibility, incongruous with his really finite nature, and with that of every other creature; ubiquity is
real

real infinity, and the infinite Spirit alone can say, *Do not I fill heaven and earth?*

7. The idea of ubiquity is affixed in all the old testament to Jehovah. It is mentioned as a real infinity gloriously proper and peculiar to him alone. It is not an ubiquity of works, and of fame, *Covering the heavens with his glory, and filling the earth with his praise.*† It is an ubiquity of presence, real, influential, and incomprehensible. A science too wonderful for us; it is high, we can neither deny it, nor attain unto it.†

8. The writers of the new testament excite the idea of ubiquity, and affix it to Jesus Christ. The man Jesus is not capable of ubiquity; if, therefore, infallible writers ascribe ubiquity to him, they must mean to ascribe to him a nature superior to human, superior to angelic; they must mean that he is, what they elsewhere call him, God. If the fact be established, the inference will follow.

John the Baptist says, *The only begotten Son, who STANDETH among you, is in the bosom of the Father.*|| Jesus Christ tells Nicodemus, *The Son of Man, who CAME DOWN from heaven, is in heaven.*§ But, say our opponents, *Attici gaudent participiis*; here is *enallagen temporis*. We beg leave to reply by three remarks.

1. The question is, not whether Attic poets and orators wrote thus: but whether the grave founders of the christian church, speaking of the *person of Christ*, an article of the utmost importance, and which he, who inspired them, knew would be extremely litigated, and where the writer's designs were more to give distinct ideas than pleasing sounds; not whether these writers used the several dialects and the several figures of speech in other places, but whether S. John used them in these two passages. We are not obliged to allow that he did. When one phrase of S. John's makes for the deity of Christ, it is either a solecism, or it is Greek-Hebrew; when another phrase of the same writer makes for the deity of Christ, it is oratorical elegance, it is an Atticism.

2. The Greeks had, in general, participles for every tense of a verb, by which they avoided a confusion of time, and used their participles as distinctly as the tenses of their verbs. "Every complete verb, says an accurate writer, is expressive of an *attribute*; of *time*; and of an *assertion*. Now if we take away the *assertion*, and thus destroy the *verb*, there will remain the *attribute* and the *time*, which makes the essence of a *participle*."* According to this S. John attributed *existence* to Christ in two places at the same *time*.

O

3. The

* Jer. xxiii. 24. † Hab. iii. 3. ‡ Psal. cxxxix. 6. || John i. 15. 18. 26. § iii. 13. * Hermes, b. i. c. 10.

3. The scope of these places does not require a figurative sense to be affixed to the terms. S. John was writing the history of one, whom he called *God*. Ubiquity belongs to the history of *God*. John the Baptist was speaking of *Jehovah* before whom he went. Ubiquity belongs to *Jehovah*. After the writer had given notice that he spoke of one, who *was with God, and was God*, ought we to be surprised if he ascribed a perfection of *God* to him!

Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there AM I in the midst of them. I AM with you alway even unto the end of the world.†*

The fulfilment of these promises is impossible without the perfection of ubiquity. Mr. Le Clerc's sense of the first is false in fact, and he grounds that fallshood on a violent misconstruction. The meaning seems plainly this. The old testament oeconomy was supported by the influence and presence of *God*; so shall the new testament dispensation be. *God* promised his *presence* to the Jews when he gave the *laws* of their church; I promise *mine* to christians, now I am giving the *laws* of their churches. The Jews understood their promise of the real influence and presence of *Jehovah*; it was neither the presence of reason, nor of revelation merely: but it was the all-pervading, all-impressive influence of the Supreme Spirit; I speak in popular style, understand me so. The Jews have a common saying, *Where two or three are met to study the law, there is the Shekinah among them;†* you christians shall say, *Where two or three are gathered together in Christ's name, there is he in the midst of them.* You are my body, and you shall be animated with the fulness of me, who fill all in all.||

The reverend Mr. Lindsey says, "That the Lord Jesus is intrusted with a mighty extensive power and dominion for the good of his church and people, is plainly and expressly revealed to us, Matt. xxviii. 18. 20. John xiv. &c. How and in what manner he exerciseth this power is wholly unrevealed, and therefore unsearchable by us, as much as the way and manner of *God's* providence, under which Christ acteth, and which superintends and overrules all things."§

So then! This scheme does not answer its end; like ours it proposes some articles to the belief of its professors, which it does not condescend to explain. I give, however, the preference to the old system of Christ's divinity, because, while it requires me to believe the *mighty dominion* of Jesus, it reveals his Godhead, and so accounts for his exercise of it:

whereas

* Matt. xviii. 20. † xxviii. 20. ‡ Poli Synops. in loc.
|| Eph. i. 23. § Apol. p. 136.

whereas the new scheme of his mere humanity gives him a dominion in all worlds, while it confines his person and presence, and consequently his influence, to one place, and so leaves his government, not only unsearchable and unrevealed, but absolutely impossible. The believer of Christ's divinity speaks consistently: he says, The man Jesus is in one place at one time: but the deity united to the man fills heaven and earth. The believer of Christ's mere humanity says, The man Jesus is confined to one place at one time, yet he exerciseth a dominion over all places at the same time; and when we ask, *How can these things be?* we are told, They are *unrevealed and unsearchable*. Who believes mysteries now! Whose faith is fitted to transubstantiation now!

If the divinity of Jesus be allowed, we can believe, that he, *whom the heavens retain until the times of the restitution of all things,* stood by Paul in the castle at Jerusalem;†* that he, who, *after he had offered one sacrifice for sin, FOR EVER SAT DOWN on the right hand of God,‡* APPEARED unto Saul to make him a witness both of the things, which he had seen, and of the things, in the which he WOULD APPEAR again unto him.¶ Now I understand how he can be present with his apostles in heaven, and with their successors on earth;§ making war upon the wicked on earth, while he appears in the presence of God making intercession for us.*

Page 17. Compare the works of Jesus with the claims of Jehovah.

1. Had I been born a Canadian savage, I should certainly have thought that the GREAT SPIRIT CREATED the world.† Had I been born a Greenlander, I should have said, "My kajak did not make itself. More skill is displayed in the structure of the meanest bird than in that of the best kajak, and more still in that of man than in the composition of either. Certainly there must be some Being, who MADE all these things, a Being that always was, and can never cease to be."‡

2. These dictates of nature, ideas of a creating First Cause, obtained by sensation and reflection, I find to have been the ideas of civilized heathens.

Deus . . . et Natura . . .

Quisquis fuit ille deorum

Coelo terras, et terris abscidit undas,

Et liquidum spisso secrevit ab aere coelum.¶

O 2

Es

* Acts iii. 21. † xxiii. 10, 11. ‡ Heb. x. 12. ¶ Acts xxvi. 16. § 2 Cor. v. 8. Matt. xxviii. 20. * Rev. xix. 11. Heb. ix. 24. † Charlevoix's Voy. to Canada, Let. xxiii. ‡ Crantz's Hist. of Greenland, vol. i. b. iii. c. 5. ¶ Ovidii Metam. i. 1. 1. 17. 2. 1, &c.

ΕΙΣ Δ' ΕΣ' ΑΥΤΟΥΣ ΕΙΣ ΤΑ ΕΥΧΟΛΑ ΠΑΡΕΤΙΛΥΤΑΙ.*

3. The inspired oracles of Judaism preserve and refine, expand and explain these ideas. Job the Arabian prince, and David the royal prophet, Solomon the wisest, and Amos the meanest, of mankind, unite in saying to me, *Seek him, who maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night: who calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out on the face of the earth, the LORD is his name.*†

4. The new testament confirms me yet more, if possible. It tells me, *The invisible things of God, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made.* What invisible objects does a Creator prove by creating? *His own eternal power and Godhead.* S. Paul's CREATOR is the incorruptible God, who is to be worshipped and served, and who is God blessed for ever.‡ Yet this same S. Paul affirms, *All things in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, were CREATED by Jesus Christ, and for him.*|| The divinity of Jesus may be rested on this article alone. S. Paul's decision is final, *He, who made all things, is God.*§

5. There is no way of getting over this evidence. If some form a creed, and say, *The new testament ascribes to Jesus only a figurative creation by the gospel; Dr. Clarke will reply, Nothing can be more forced and unnatural than such an interpretation.** If others say, *The Father first created Christ, and then empowered Christ to create the universe; we reply, Create the universe who would, He, who created all things, is God.* In vain they talk of a subordinate instrumental god, the Creator himself denies the idea. *Thus saith the Lord, that created the heavens; God himself, that formed the earth, I am the Lord and there is none else. Is there a God besides me? Yea there is no God, I know not any.*† I the Lord made all things, I stretched forth the heavens ALONE. I spread abroad the earth BY MYSELF.‡ Reduce my Creator to a creature who can, make creeds who will, my faith shall never be circumscribed within the narrow dreary dens of their words, it shall soar in the wide expanse of divine revelation.

Nescit enim Cæsar, (quamvis deus omnia norit)

Ultimus hic qua fit conditione locus.

Magna tenent illud numen molimina rerum;

Hæc est cœlesti pectore cura minor.||

Qui

* Orpheus ap. Just. de Monarch. Clem. Alex. Strom. v.

† Amos v. 8. ‡ Rom. i. 20. 23, 24. || Col. i. 16. § Heb. iii.

4. * Script. Doct. N. 550. † Isa. xlv. 18. xlv. 8. ‡ Isa. xlv. 24. || Ovid. de Pont. El. iii.

Qui gentes omnes, mariaque, et terras movet,
Ejus sum civis civitate coelitus.*

Page 20. *The scriptures claim religious worship for Jesus Christ.*

1. By Jesus Christ in this article I mean the Godhead that united itself to the man, whom we commonly call Jesus. The man is not deified by this union, consequently the manhood is entitled to no worship. The humanity is, so to speak, the temple in which the deity dwells.

2. The scriptures distinguish *civil* respect from *religious* homage: but it knows nothing of supreme and subordinate religious worship.

3. Religious worship supposes its object in possession of all those inconceivable perfections, which constitute the eminent *greatness* of the Supreme Being. The scriptures ascribe this eminence to Jesus. In Christ dwelleth *ALL the fulness* of the Godhead bodily.

4. Religious worship supposes its object displaying all those communications, which constitute the eminent *goodness* of the Supreme Being. The scriptures ascribe those communications to Jesus. He is the Creator, the Preserver, the Redeemer, the Felicity of mankind.

5. Religious worship supposes its object holding and exercising universal empire. The scriptures ascribe universal empire to Jesus. He reigns over heaven, and earth, and hell.

6. Right to religious worship is incommunicable, because supreme greatness, supreme goodness, and supreme empire, the grounds and reasons of worship, are incommunicable. When we suppose those excellencies in any being, we have obtained an idea of what we call God, and that of a creature is lost. The communication of Godhead is impossible in the nature of things; it would be to make that which had a beginning, have no beginning, and so on. Worship is action founded on reason; when the reason is absent, the action must not appear.

7. God, who has a natural right to the worship of his creatures, may acquire, and does actually acquire, new rights to that worship every day by his exuberant goodness in favour of his worshippers. It is no objection therefore to Christ's natural rights, that he hath acquired by his beneficent acts in our favour new rights. We *bow the knee* to him as well because of his natural dignity, as because *he tasted death for every man*.

8. Jesus Christ is worshipped by those celestial intelligences, who, having never sinned, derived no salvation from him; and

and who, being of an order superior to the human, could derive no protection, much less creation, from a nature lower than their own. Their worship, therefore, is founded on his deity. What odd propositions are these? Jesus Christ is a mere man. Jesus Christ created angels. That is to say, A creature created creatures more excellent than himself.

9. When it is objected to us, All power is *given* to Jesus, therefore he is *not* God. We reply, All power is given to Jesus, therefore he *is* God. We prove our conclusion thus. The gift of all power in heaven and earth either means, in the sense of our opponents, the gift of an empire to govern, or the gift of ability to govern it. The first alone is impracticable, the last is impossible. The gift of empire, without the gift of ability, is the putting of a sceptre into the hand of an infant. The gift of ability is impossible; for the exercise of *ALL power in heaven and in earth* requires an infinity of perfections; the Governor of all worlds must be in all worlds at the same time, he must maintain the order of his empire by an universal all-pervading action, by an ubiquity proper to God and incommunicable to creatures. The word *give* is equivocal. Our opponents take it for the *confering* of a right: we take it for the *acknowledgment* of a right. The word *δίδωμι* is very vague, and we be to the system that rests on its precise etymology. What a fine inference is this! Magistrates *give glory and strength, and worship unto Jehovah*; therefore Jehovah is not God; at most he is only a subordinate God; for he *derives* glory from magistrates? *All power is given to me*, said our Redeemer; that is, All heaven *allow* what the Jews deny, that I am *Lord of all*. The Father hath *given me power over all flesh*; that is, The Father *allows* and *approves* of my right as God, and he has *constituted* the display of it in me, Jesus, the man.

10. It is asked, If Jesus be God, why did he say no more about it? We answer, Jesus never expressly said he was the Messiah in Judea; when people enquired, he referred them to his *works*. If Jesus be God, we can shew a reason why he said no more: if he be only a mere man, our opponents can shew no reason why he said so much.

Page 40. *Some of the scribes pretend, that he who sent Moses was a created angel.*

1. The doctrine of foreappearances is to be determined by scripture alone; we must *compare spiritual things with spiritual*. The opinions of men are only counsel on both sides of the question.

2. The opinions of men are very much divided on this article; however, all are reducible to three. In the first class

we

we put those, who thought the person appearing either a created angel, or the pre-existent human soul of Jesus Christ. The first is an ancient opinion of some Jews, the last is a modern comment of some christians. The same objections lie against both. The appearance took the name, by which the Supreme Being was distinguished, and suffered himself to be worshipped, contrary to the practice of appearing angels, who said to those, who would have worshipped them, *Sec ye do it not, we are your fellow-servants; worship God.**

In a second class I put Maimonides, Augustine, Hilary, Ambrose, Bishop Patrick, and others, who thought the appearance God.† The Jews thought him Jehovah simply, the christian commentators thought him Jehovah-Jesus. If I have adopted this opinion, it is because I think this has fewest difficulties, and most evidences; and if I have put it into the mouth of John, it is because I perceive it was the opinion of Stephen, and therefore an opinion known in John's age, and, if the true one, probably received by him. *The prophet like Moses was in the church in the wilderness with the angel, who spake to Moses in Mount Sina, &c.†* However, the force of the argument stands independent on John, although not on Stephen.

A third class of interpreters take the appearance for, I know not what, delegated created god. A strange unnatural idea, invented, it should seem, to get rid of a difficulty in the history. A poor exchange, a mystery for an impossibility?

The opinions of uninspired men, as we have said, are respectable as advice, but not as law. The great difficulty is taken from S. John, who calls Jesus Christ $\lambda\omicron\gamma\omega$.|| He says, $\lambda\omicron\gamma\omega$ was with the Father in the beginning, and created the world. Now some writers had spoken of a $\lambda\omicron\gamma\omega$, as a kind of secondary god, before S. John's time. The question is, Did he use the word in their meaning? Mr. Le Clerc asks, § Did Plato take the word in the sense of S. John; or did S. John take it in the sense of Plato? We reply, Neither. We account for the matter thus.

1. Some of the ancient Jews, not caring to deny the divinity of the appearance, nor daring to apply what was said of him to a man or an angel, left the matter. He was God; he was God's chief angel or messenger; *Quis ille esset, vere intelligere Moses et Israelitæ non potuerunt.†* They could

not

* Rev. xix. 10. xxii. 9. † More Nevoc. p. ii. cap. 42. Pat. in Gen. xxxv. 1. xxxi. 3. Vide Pelarg. in Exod. iii. 6. † Acts viii. 38. || John i. § Ars Crit. de Sectar. Sermone, 1. 2. 1. 14. † Rabbi Moses Nehem. fil. apud Grot. de Verit. v. 21.

not tell, is a fact: therefore Moses could not, is not a fair conclusion.

2. Some of the ancient Jews, catching the idea of *speaking* or *revealing* the will of God, which was the end of the appearing, ventured to call the appearance מִסְרָה, the *word* of the Lord, and hence, probably, the *word of God* became an idiom for *God*.*

3. The Jews, who lived out of Judea, translated the term into the Greek tongue, and the person, who appeared, obtained the name of λογος. The term *logos*, while it retained its original Jewish idea, was determinate and proper, it stood for that singular being God the medium, that great Supreme, whose manner of existence was unknown, and who would some time appear in the likeness of a man to redeem mankind. Chaldaeo Paraph. *Messias Verbum Dei dicitur*. Hof. vii.†

4. The term *Memra*, not signifying merely *Jehovah*, but *Jehovah* under the peculiar idea of holding communion with men, by appearing in the form of a man, was adopted by the Targumists, or Chaldaeo paraphrasts. These paraphrases were in the common dialect of the Jews in the time of Jesus Christ.† They were read in the synagogues as explanatory of the text, which was read first in Hebrew. Jesus Christ expressed the first verse of the twenty-second psalm, when he hung upon the cross, not in the Hebrew words of the text, but in the Chaldaeo paraphrase of it. The apostles often adopted their style, and S. John took the word λογος from those books, retaining in it only its old idea.

5. Plato, who travelled into Egypt to improve his knowledge, learnt the Jewish notion of *Memra*, or *logos*, and, affixing ideas to the term, of which the ancient Jews had never thought, returned it to the Jews, in his writings, full of dark, pagan, enigmatical ideas. All things were new except the term. It was Moses Atticised indeed!‡

6. It became fashionable in time for men of science to speak and think as Plato spoke and thought, and Philo the Jew, and after him many christian divines, took up the *Platonic* *logos*, and thus brought the *Memra* of the old Targumists, and the *logos* of S. John into obscurity and disgrace, although it does not appear that S. John knew any thing about Plato's ideas of it.

7. Nothing

* Prideaux's Connect. p. ii. chap. 3. † Grot. ubi supra.
‡ Gill's Preface to New Test. Exp. † Valerius Maximus, viii. 7. Euseb. Præp. Evan. xi. 9. xii. 12. Clem. Alex. Strom. i.

Nothing is more common than to run mad for a term, without examining its value. The history of this term proves that it has had different values in different hands; it has gone for more and less, as the exigencies of its owners required.* As S. John used it, it stood for God, who foreappeared to the patriarchs, and gave the law to Moses. It described a divine-human being, anciently known to the Jews by the name Jehovah-memra, and since to the world by the name Jesus.

I must check, I perceive, this lawless pen, and I will conclude with one article more.

Page 68. *Happy for christians, had they rested without philosophical explanations!*

I have not attempted to EXPLAIN THE MANNER of the divine existence. I do not know it. Wise and good men have uttered many absurdities in attempting to explain it; and wise and good men have run into an absurd extreme, when they have rejected a plain clear declaration of an inspired writer, because they could not reduce every idea in it to their own comprehension. Is there not a middle way? May I not be allowed to go on the principles of one, who was not fond of mystery, where he could obtain clear ideas: but, who, however, preferred a sober rational faith before unscriptural conjectures? I speak of Le Clerc. *Nemo mortaliū adæquatum notionem Dei perfectionum unquam sibi effinxit. Nil igitur tutius esse, quam cohibere iudicium, eum de re ipsa, tum de sententia scriptoris, quem legimus.†*

There never was a man in the world, who succeeded in attempting to explain the modus of the divine existence. The wisest of men never made the attempt. Moses began his writings by supposing the being of God; he did not attempt to prove it; and although many of the inspired writers asserted his existence, and, to discountenance idolatry, pleaded for his perfections, yet no one of them ever pretended to explain the manner of his being. On the contrary a holy awe covered their minds, all inspired as they were, and they declared, *They could not find the Almighty out.* Why should we affect to be *wiser above what is written?*

S. Epiphanius complains, Origenem, qui Adamantius et συντακτικῶς nuncupatur, ex συλλογισμῶν Ἀριστοτελικῶν καὶ γεωμετρικῶν θεῶν κατὰ τὰ παρρησιαστικὰ, astruere voluisse, et ideo scæde lapsum esse. I fear, too many have fallen by the same mean into error.

Before we deny the divinity of Jesus Christ, what if we were to try to deny the principles, on which the assertors of

* Clerici Ars Crit. capite de sectarum sermone. † Ars Crit. de notionibus adæquatis.

it go? We lay down one from a Master in Israel. "Certainly we do not know the essence of the Supreme Being, not knowing the real essence of a pebble, or a fly, or of our own selves."* We lay down a second in the words of a learned prelate, "Where the truth of a doctrine depends not on the evidence of the things themselves, but on the authority of him that reveals it, there the only way to prove the doctrine to be true, is to prove the testimony of him that revealed it to be infallible."† We lay down a third from that most learned and accurate critic, Le Clerc. "Si eâ quâ par est attentione et reverentia expendamus quæ Apostoli habent de Jesu Christo, facile intelligimus eos non putasse *merum esse hominem*, quandoquidem ei mundi creationem tribuunt; eosque errare, qui similia sentiunt: sed de ratione, qua æternum numen cum Jesu homine conjunctum sit, tacent; quo credibile sit arcanum illud iis, in terris agentibus, nondum revelatum fuisse. *Sciverunt certe Christum esse Deum et hominem, atque ita de eo loquuti sunt: sed modum rei ignorasse videntur.*‡

On these sure grounds we go, and on these principles we free the doctrines of the gospel from the charge of contradiction and absurdity, while we retain the rational scriptural idea of mystery. We beg leave to remark the following facts, which may more fully explain our meaning.

1. What we call doctrines of the gospel are so many facts proposed to our faith by credible testimony. The divinity of Christ is an historical fact. The resurrection of the dead is a prophetic fact.

2. They, who related those facts, never pretended to a thorough knowledge of them. *We know*, says S. Paul, *in part.*|| The apostle must either mean to affirm, we have an imperfect knowledge of the *objects*, or we have an imperfect knowledge of the *evidence* of their existence. He could not mean the last, consequently he meant the first.

3. The apostles did no more in proposing incomprehensible objects to our belief, than the masters of human science do. "We know but *little*", says one of the finest modern writers, of the nature of bodies; we discover some of their properties, as motion, figure, colours, &c: but of their essence we are ignorant: we know still much *less* of the soul: but of the essence or nature of God, we know *nothing*."§ The great Locke sets out with requiring his readers not to "let loose their thoughts into the vast ocean of *being*, as if all the boundless

* Locke's Essay, b. ii. c. xxiii. 35. See that whole excellent chapter. † Stillingfleet's *origines sacræ* ii. 8. ‡ *Ars Crit. de notion. adæq.* || 1 Cor. xiii. 9. § *Elements of universal erudition* by Baron Bielsfeld, vol. i. c. 1.

boundless extent were the natural and undoubted possession of their understanding, wherein there was nothing exempt from its decisions, or that escaped its comprehension."* Astronomers require their pupils to "take care always to approach the firmament, that divine book, as they do the other book of God, with reverence and humility, not having too high an opinion of their own abilities, as if they could with the line of human reason fathom all the depths of divine counsels."† What these great masters discovered in the sublimer works of nature, the countryman discovers in a polype in his cottage-ditch, and all mankind are forced to believe the existence of objects, the certainty of facts, combinations of qualities, of which they have no adequate ideas, and for which they can give no account.

4. No man ever yet proposed a system of religion free from mystery. Even those gentlemen, who discard many received doctrines on account of their mysteriousness, are obliged to own, that "the *most* rational and important doctrines imply something beyond the narrow capacity of our comprehension."‡

5. The belief of those facts, which we call doctrines of the gospel, is analogous in christianity to self-love in the law of nature. "God has inseparably interwoven the laws of eternal justice with the happiness of each individual. In consequence of which mutual connection of justice and human felicity, he has not perplexed the law of nature with a multitude of abstracted rules and precepts, referring merely to the fitness or unfitness of things: but has graciously reduced the rule of obedience to this one paternal precept, "that man should pursue his own happiness." This is the foundation of what we call ethics, or natural law."§ Thus in revelation, God hath not perplexed christianity with disquisitions, the understanding of which would require a long train of metaphysical investigations: but he hath revealed a few facts, which he declares, he either hath brought to pass, or will bring to pass; and these facts have ever been found the most irresistible motives to constrain men to obey the law of nature. The unity of two natures constituting the dignity of the Author of christianity is one of these facts.

6. To deprive christianity of its mysteries is to reduce it to a feeble human science; we get rid of mystery and motive together. The removal of, what are called by some, corruptions of christianity, is to be rewarded, it seems, with the

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* Essay, Introduction. † Long's Astronomy, pref. p. 7.
‡ Bourn's discourses, vol. ii. disc. vii. § Blackstone's Commentaries, Introduction s. 2.

conversion of Jews and Mohammedans. But let us not too eagerly follow these illusory dreams. Let us consider four things. 1. It is not certain, that Jews and Turks reject christianity on account of our doctrine of Christ's divinity. They do not study our polemical divinity; they study easier books, our lives, and in them they read objections to christianity. 2. If it be true that Christ's divinity is a stumbling-block to the modern Jews, nothing is seen in it but the fulfilment of prophecy. *The Lord of hosts is a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence to them, as he was to their fathers, who stumbled at Christ, that stumbling-stone.** 3. The doctrine of accommodation, which is the ground of these pretences, is the most dangerous doctrine in the world. A miser stumbles at the laws of liberality, a proud man stumbles at the gospel motives to humility, a mere rationalist stumbles at the invisible realities of faith; and by endeavouring to accommodate the gospel to these dispositions we explain it all away. 4. Were we to divest religion of all these offensive credenda, and were we to reduce it to the gospel of Socrates, or to the more refined gospel of Professor Hutcheson, would it convert the Turks and Jews? A great authority assures us, "Science and philosophy always operate slowly; and it is long before their influence reaches the people, or can produce any sensible effect upon them. They may perhaps gradually, and in a long course of years, undermine and shake an established system of false religion, but there is no instance of their having overturned one."† A reflection well worth the attention of those, who would reduce the gospel to an enfeebled system of mere moral philosophy.

God hath not been pleased to reveal the *modus* of his existence to us: but he hath been pleased to say, *Let all bitterness and wrath and evil-speaking be put away from among you.* I have not therefore thought myself at liberty to call names, and to denounce judgments. I have seen a writer on one side prove that *Jesus Christ thought not of the impious robbery of being equal with God*, by repeatedly declaring that the doctrine of christianity is a MOST ABSURD AND EMPIRIOUS DOCTRINE; and I have seen one on the other side affirm, *Christ died both with respect to his human and divine nature*, and prove it by adding, *They, who maintain the contrary, belong to the devil both body and soul.*‡ But I have disliked this method of reasoning ever since I saw a book entitled *Powder and Firebrands*.

I have no design by this Letter to enter into a controversy with any man, nor should I have found time to have written it,

* Isa. viii. 13, 14. Rom. ix. 32, 33. † Pet. ii. 4, &c. ‡ Dr. Robertson's Hist. of Charles V. book xii. † Musculus. Bayle. Rem. K.

it, unless an attention to my health had confined me. If I have let fall one unkind reflection on any conscientious man, I beg pardon; it was undesigned. I would rather bring the subject home to my own bosom, in the pious soliloquy of my most worthy friend the Reverend Mr. Turner.* “How, my soul, dost thou stand affected towards this Saviour? What hast thou seen of his excellencies, and how far have they, indeed, impressed and moved thy affectionate powers? Thou owest all to him, that thou canst call *enjoyment* either in possession or in hope! Let the glories of thy Redeemer be more attentively considered—Let his love constrain thee to the supreme love of God, and just love to man.—To this Fullness go, in all thy necessities; here look for light, and life, and joy eternal.—To his service and pleasure devote all thy powers; live to him in improving holiness.—Let the liberty he has given thee of applying to him as the fountain of happiness, encourage thee to diligence and constancy in that application.—Let thy thirst be always for these *living waters*, which alone are capable of satisfying thee.—As he is all *fullness* to thee, be thou all *gratitude*, and *love*, and *praise* to him; rejoice in him as thy light, thy strength, thy righteousness, and thy salvation! Amen!

Hail, thou ETERNAL FULLNESS, hail!
Great Source of bliss divine!
In whom adoring angels see
All thy great Father shine.

JESUS!—O may that best of names
Dwell ever on my tongue!
On earth my solace, hope, and love,
In heaven my rapturous song!”

* See that excellent little piece entitled, *Short Meditations on several Portions of Scripture*; a piece, which it would be difficult to commend, as its merit demands. The above is from Medit. V.

